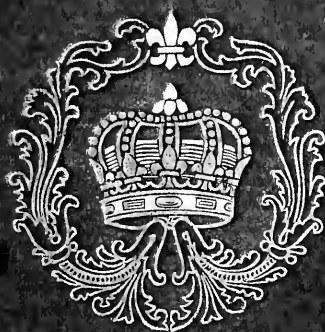


LOUIS XVIII





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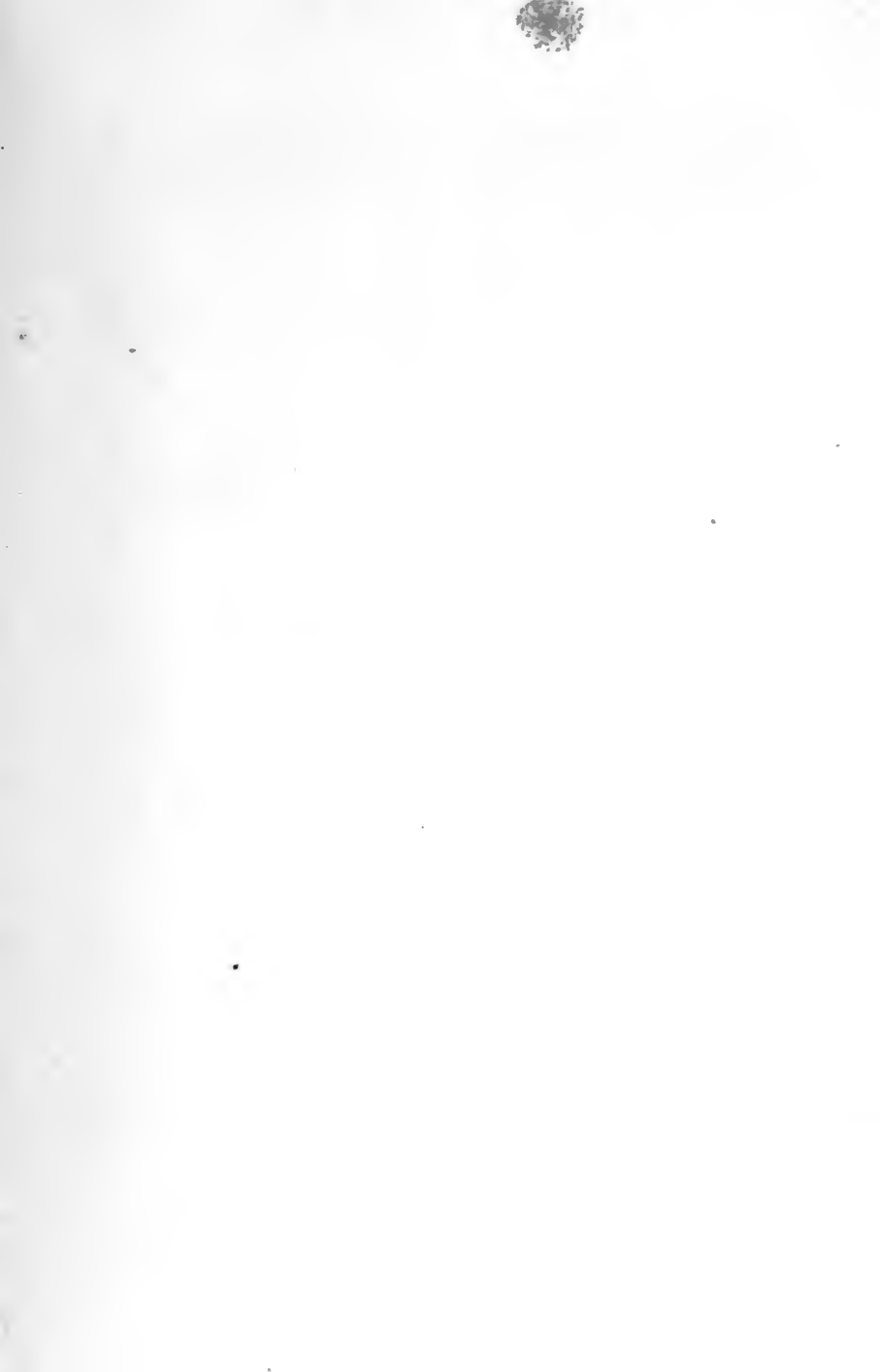
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LOUIS XVIII







LOUIS
ROI DE FRANCE

Né à Versailles



XVIII.
ET DE NAVARRE

le 17 Novembre 1755.

From an engraving by P. Audouin after a drawing by P. Bouillon.

LOUIS XVIII

By MARY F. SANDARS

*Author of "Honoré de Balzac,"
"Lauzun: Courtier and Adventurer."*

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS



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PREFACE

MANY excellent histories of the Restoration, containing full accounts of the reign of Louis XVIII, have been written. M. Ernest Daudet gives us the result of long researches in his exhaustive work on the Emigration, which treats of Louis XVIII's wanderings over Europe; and in the numberless accounts of the French Revolution we come across many references to the Comte de Provence, who is generally treated in an unfriendly spirit. This sketch, however, of Louis XVIII's life from cradle to grave is, I believe, the first attempt in the French or English language to link the different periods of his life together, and, however faultily, to present the man as a whole.

Louis XVIII is personally an interesting figure; politically he is a man to whom the French nation owe a deep debt of gratitude for introducing them to the benefits of constitutional government, as well as for the firm and dignified stand against the exigencies of the Allies in 1815, by which he saved the country from dismemberment. His merits as a ruler have, I think, been partially obscured by the mistakes he undoubtedly made when he returned to France as a stranger after an exile of twenty-two years, and by the

policy of the last few years of his reign, when he was dying, but was counted responsible for measures which were in reality the work of Charles X and his advisers. If, however, we look at the period from 1815 to the end of 1821, when Louis XVIII was really at the helm of the State, and when, putting aside the prejudices of early training, he fitted himself to the requirements of a new France, I think we shall admire his sagacity and impartiality, and allow that he was a wise and beneficent ruler.

In his private life we find much that is excellent. Undoubtedly his love of magnificent ceremony occasionally excited derision; certainly his dependence on sentimental friendships was a misfortune, not only to himself but to the State, though much excuse for it may be found in his isolated position in his family. On the other hand, his kingly dignity, magnanimity, and serenity under misfortune, his courage and gaiety, and his power of seeing the comical side of his troubles, are truly admirable; and it seems strange that in an age of many biographies this sketch should be the first attempt at portraying so interesting a personality.

I must conclude by thanking the Baron de Barante and Colonel Phipps, late R.A., for the very kind help they have given me.

MARY F. SANDARS.

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LOUIS XVIII

CHAPTER I

Louis XVIII's character—His birth, childhood and education—The Dauphin's marriage—The Comte de Provence's marriage—Death of Louis XV.

LOUIS XVIII is a man to whom I think justice has not generally been done, particularly during the earlier part of his life. Monstrous calumny is strikingly characteristic of the seething ante-revolutionary time, calumny which, shouted with hysterical extravagance when the Revolution was unloosed, led to its worst excesses. Society was depraved ; but every one was not smirched with the sooty blackness imagined by the foul fancies of the populace, sated with unsavoury stories of the Pompadour, the Dubarry, and the Parcaux-Cerfs.

After the expiration of a few months as popular favourite, a position which only served to injure him with the Court party, the future Louis XVIII—then known as Monsieur, or as the Comte de Provence—was lampooned and calumniated more violently than any one, except perhaps the unfortunate Queen. The reasons for the storm of hatred he aroused are obvious. Though every one affected to consider him a mere figurehead, in the later days of the Revolution he was

the principal menace to democracy, it being really for his cause, though not in his name, that the States of Europe, who flouted, insulted, and humiliated him, assembled their armies to attack infuriated and terrified France. In Napoleon's days, Louis XVIII was completely forgotten by the majority of his countrymen, and had become a homeless wanderer, liable at any moment to be summarily ejected from an apparently friendly State at a word from the all-powerful conqueror, but he was still the representative of the old order in France ; and the libels burst out again with the utmost virulence when in the wake of foreign armies he returned to his native land. France was tired of battling ; but when for the heroic figure of Napoleon was substituted an unwieldy old man with theatrical manners, it was difficult for any one to furbish up fitting enthusiasm. Even the Royalists, who during his exile in Russia had christened him "the greatest Jacobin in Europe," were not attached to him—he was at best a compromise ; and compromises do not inspire devotion.

Returning to France a stranger, after an exile of twenty-three years, and finding himself among almost unparalleled political difficulties, he began by making mistakes owing to his ignorance of the general trend of feeling and opinion. Indeed, he may possibly have owed a debt of gratitude to Napoleon and the Hundred Days incursion, which proved to him that he had completely misapprehended the spirit of the country over which he had come to reign, and that the folly of the Ultra-Royalists was landing him at the edge of a precipice.

When once he had learnt his lesson, however, his sagacity was unailing, and his magnanimity, tact, and

forbearance remarkable; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that France owes her present position as one of the Great Powers, to his firmness and eloquence at the time when her so-called allies gathered round eager to dismember, and thus to cripple permanently, the country which had caused them infinite trouble, expense, and loss of life. Had Louis XVIII outlived his brother and been followed by the nephew whom he had instructed in state-craft, it is possible that the Bourbons might never have lost the throne of France.

His biography is, I consider, a tragedy, although in the end he attained his ambition and became King of France. It is undoubtedly a tragedy to be born a century too late, educated in articles of faith which are an anachronism, hedged round by barriers which suddenly break down and admit a thousand strange sights, sounds, and ideas—an entirely new world—to the bewildered senses.

It is a tragedy, too, for a man to be endowed with strong family affection, with an intelligence which far transcends his will power, and when old, and enfeebled by a life of disappointment, humiliation, and long-deferred hope, to be the only person among his surroundings who has learnt anything from the march of events, so that he is continually in mental opposition to those who are dear to him, watches with ever-weakening powers the baffling of the measures dictated by his own sagacity, and foresees with bitter sorrow the calamities which must fall on his House when he has been removed by death from the direction of affairs.

Louis-Xavier Stanislas, Comte de Provence, the future Louis XVIII, first saw the light at Versailles on November 17, 1755.

At the time of his birth it seemed extremely unlikely that he would ever inherit the crown of France, for his grandfather Louis XV was a comparatively young man, his father the Dauphin, the King's only son, was still living, and two little brothers, the Dukes of Bourgoyne and of Berry, had come into the world before him.

Nevertheless, the appearance of another prince in the direct line to the throne was a matter of considerable importance, and the ceremonies usual on such an occasion were duly observed. The King was at his daughter-in-law's bedside for over an hour before the birth took place, and a page was despatched to Paris to inform the Governor of the Dauphine's impending accouchement. The Governor at once hurried to Versailles, sending another page to carry the news to the Hôtel-de-Ville. There the Council assembled and remained till they heard of the birth, which they did in three ways—first by an officer sent from the Governor, secondly by an officer sent from the King, and lastly by the Master of Ceremonies, whose duty it was to enter the birth in the registers of the Hôtel-de-Ville. Presents were given by the town of Paris to the bearers of the happy tidings, including a sum of money and a snuff-box to the officer of the Guards, the former varying in amount and the latter in value according to the importance of the newly born infant. The birth of a princess was disappointing—except perhaps to the good town of Paris, which had to defray the expenses—as the messenger then received nothing, unless the girl happened to be the eldest of the family.

Meanwhile the Governor was shown the infant by the "Gouvernante" in the large hall of Versailles,

asked, as ceremonial enjoined, whose the child was that had been born to Madame la Dauphine, and received the prescribed answer, the Dauphin was officially informed of the event, and a messenger went to his apartments on the part of the King to register the birth of the little Prince. Later in the day fireworks were displayed in the Place d'Armes, and a Te Deum was performed at the King's Mass.

The grand ceremonies were, however, deferred till Sunday, when a Te Deum was performed at Nôtre-Dame, a fire was lit in the Place de la Grève, and the Governor marched through Paris surrounded by his Guards and threw money to the people. Before the statue of Henri IV on the Pont Neuf etiquette obliged him to distribute gold pieces ; in fact these expeditions generally cost him about a thousand crowns, and M. de Gesvres cannot be blamed if he occasionally discovered some pretext for evading the costly and unpleasant duty. Afterwards fêtes were held at the Hôtel-de-Ville and at the Governor's house, at which every one was given cold meat and wine, while dancing went on till late at night. The cost of the entertainment at the Governor's house had been defrayed by the Governor till fifteen or sixteen years before the birth of the Comte de Provence, when M. de Maurepas represented to the King that it was not fair that these expenses should be charged to M. le duc de Gesvres, and the King, deferring to his courtly adviser, decreed that the town of Paris should provide all the refreshments, and should send whatever was required to the Governor's house.

The King's "good town of Paris" was a convenient beast of burden, and no one at Versailles heeded whether the burdens so lightheartedly imposed were

crushing the life out of her, or stopped to ask themselves what would happen with the great mass of units who—insignificant as they were—merely bourgeoisie, peasants, shopkeepers, made up the bulk of the people in the great kingdom of France, when the Revolution came. For, strange as it may appear, even from the Court point of view, the Revolution was on its way. The King, stricken with a deadly ennui which had its birth in dissipation and in the long-borne loneliness of the throne, heard the beating of its wings, and was only too conscious of the darkness which heralded its advent. "Things as they are will last as long as I do," he said wearily. Meanwhile, interminable wars, abuses of every sort in the Government, pensions, sinecures, and shameless extravagance at Court, had reduced the finances of the kingdom to such a terrible condition that it seemed doubtful whether Louis XV would not live to reign over a bankrupt kingdom. Hence, continual disputes between the King and local "parlements" who refused to register the edicts imposing fresh taxation. Hence, too, incidentally, rumours from time to time at Court of famines and risings in the provinces, the gradual change of the affection felt for Louis Le Bien Aimé to dislike, and later, when the Pompadour had given way to the disreputable du Barry, to execration.

Nevertheless, in spite of impending bankruptcy, there was still magnificence at Court, in spite of the gradual mining of the old social system, of which the King was centre, the same etiquette, the same forms, the same outward worship of Royalty surrounded the throne. It was only after the crash that the enlightened observer could lay his hand on the fabric, and, shaking his head wisely, remark that with this and that channel of decay

eating into the structure, it was marvellous that the catastrophe had not taken place sooner.

Early impressions are ineffaceable ; and in judging the future outlook and conduct of the Comte de Provence, we must realise the kind of world on which he looked with the unquestioning eyes of childhood. Etiquette was the only important thing in life, and the family to which he belonged was a race of semi-deities increasing in importance as they neared the throne, where sat the supreme deity of all. Round about them, to minister to their greatness, were the nobility ; and of the great struggling world outside the child knew nothing.

The first mention of the public appearance of M. de Provence was on June 10, 1756, when at seven months old he, with his two elder brothers, gave audience to three newly made cardinals in succession ; each accompanied by his introducer, under-introducer, and the Master of the Ceremonies. The Duc de Luynes gives an account of this event. After describing the drive to Meudon, the dress of the cardinals—one of whom was his brother—and the ceremonial observed before they arrived at the door of the room occupied by M. le duc de Bourgoyne, he says : “ Three armchairs were in the further end of the room opposite the door ; Monseigneur le duc de Bourgoyne was in the middle, Monseigneur le duc de Berry to the right, and Monseigneur le Comte de Provence to the left. Madame de Marsan (the Gouvernante) went out of the room, bowed to and kissed the Cardinal, and after a few polite words re-entered the room in front of him, and made three curtseys at the same time with him, standing to his right. A folding chair was brought forward. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgoyne was standing and had his

cap on his head, but it had been arranged that being covered or uncovered was to signify nothing. The Cardinal, standing up, addressed Monseigneur le duc de Bourgoyne, speaking to him alone. The speech was very short. Monseigneur le duc de Bourgoyne (who was five years old) answered shortly and very well; then he sat down, and the Cardinal sat on the folding chair opposite him. This ceremony only lasted a minute; the Cardinal retired with the three ordinary reverences, and was again conducted to the door by Madame de Marsan.”¹ The incident is only mentioned by the Duc de Luynes because there was some difficulty about the ceremonial of the presentation, and it was necessary to hunt up examples of the procedure on similar occasions before the matter could be satisfactorily settled! Therefore we may suppose that audiences were no uncommon occurrence in the life of the little Comte de Provence, may safely divine, too, that they were welcome to the Gouvernante, Madame de Marsan, but were regarded by her charges as tiresome interruptions to nursery routine. The whole Royal Family were devoted to their “gouvernante,” to whose careful moral teaching they owed the unity and affection which in quite early life were strikingly characteristic of them. They called her their second mother, and were deeply grateful for the care she had lavished on them, the Comte de Provence’s numerous letters to her being always written to “my little dear little friend.”²

Sometimes etiquette seemed likely to have sinister consequences, for the Comte de Provence was a delicate baby, and when his nurse proved unsatisfactory, and it

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, June 10, 1756.

² See Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. iii. p. 58.

seemed likely that he would share the fate of most of the royal infants of that time and never live to attain man's estate, no suitable nurse could be found in Paris, and considerable delay was caused while one was procured from Normandy. "The child of an ordinary person would not find so many difficulties in procuring a wet nurse,"¹ our chronicler remarks sagely.

The baptism of the Comte de Provence took place on October 18, 1761, when he was six years old. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Narbonne, the godfathers being the King of Poland and the Duke of Lorraine, the latter being represented by the Prince of Conti, while Madame Victoire, one of Louis XV's unmarried daughters, was godmother. He was named Louis-Stanislas Xavier. His elder brother, the future Louis XVI, was baptised the same day.

The Comte de Provence and his younger brother, the Comte d'Artois — afterwards Charles X — were inseparable companions during their childhood, and though through the stress and strain to follow, when life, or all that makes life worth living, was often at stake, there were frequent dissensions between the two, the future Louis XVIII—who was occasionally credited with a want of feeling—seems always to have felt a certain affection for the gay, debonair younger brother, whose outward grace and brilliancy covered, unfortunately, an obstinately prejudiced mind which adversity could not teach.

Certainly the Comte d'Artois must have been a most engaging boy, one of many examples of the fact that childish precocity does not always fulfil its promise. Gay and lively, his power of repartee, which he seems usually to have exercised on his elder brother the Duc

¹ Luynes' *Mémoires*, Feb. 5, 1756.

de Berry, made him the amusement of the Court, who were never tired of laughing at his last childish joke, and he even dared to take liberties with his formidable and august grandfather. The Comte de Provence was not so brilliant, though he began early to exercise that diplomacy which was to characterise him during his adult life. "M. le Comte de Provence," says the Marquis de Valvons, "wishes to please, and succeeds very well; seeing me one day at his riding lesson, he asked me whether I rode well. 'Pretty well for a soldier,' I answered.

"'Oh, I know that, and M. de Lavauguyon has told me that you attack the enemy very well.'"¹

The Royal Family was tolerably numerous during the first few years of the Comte de Provence's life. At the head of it was his grandfather, Louis XV, obsessed with the worship of the Pompadour, who dismissed his ministers, and sent incapable generals to command his armies at her good pleasure. The Queen, Marie Leczinska, was a nonentity, being so much occupied by card-playing, the one amusement of her dreary life, that she had not sufficient energy left even to perform a mother's part to her six daughters. Of these daughters, the only ones important to our purpose are Mesdames Adelaïde, Victoire, and Louise, who undoubtedly exercised much influence over the Comte de Provence during his early manhood. He was the special darling of his godmother, Madame Victoire. The clever, energetic Madame Adelaïde, on the other hand, did her best to act a mother's part to the poor little Duc de Berry—afterwards Louis XVI—whose brothers were greater favourites than he in Court circles. "Whom can I love here, when nobody loves me?" he asked sadly

¹ *Souvenirs de Louis XVIII*, Lamothe-Langon.

one day. He was a timid child, and his lively aunt would do her best to encourage him. She would take him into her room and say : " Come, my poor Berry, you are here at full liberty, you have elbow room ; talk, shout, make a great deal of noise, break, smash everything. I give you 'carte blanche.'"¹ However, in 1761, " poor Berry " became a person of considerable importance, as the death of his elder brother left him in the direct line to the throne.

In 1764, three years after the death of the young Duc de Bourgoyne, Madame de Pompadour ended her brilliant, unhappy life, and France rejoiced at the disappearance of the detested favourite. Death was active at the Court about that time, for on December 20, 1765, the Comte de Provence and his brothers lost their father, the Dauphin. A little later they were completely orphaned, for in March 1766 their mother, Marie Josephine de Saxe, followed her husband to his grave. She was his second wife, married to him in February 1747, and the first years of her wedded life had been saddened by his indifference to her, and by the knowledge that he had married her against his will, and still mourned his first wife. However, in time he became tenderly attached to Marie Josephine, and grief at losing him apparently hastened her death.

" Poor France ! with a King of fifty-five and a Dauphin of eleven ! " is Louis XV's reported exclamation when he heard of the death of his only son ; and several times, as though oppressed with gloomy prognostications, he repeated the words " Poor France ! poor France ! "

Marie Leczinska, Queen of France, breathed her

¹ Todièrre, *Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, et le Comte de Provence en face de la Révolution*,

last on June 24, 1768, and only a month later a howl of execration greeted the installation of the low-born and disreputable Madame du Barry in the place of Madame de Pompadour.

Meanwhile, the care of the three Princes had been entrusted to the Duc de la Vauguyon, who was apparently not a very conscientious Governor. On the day of his death, after Louis XVI had ascended the throne, some one rushed in tears to tell Marie Antoinette of Vauguyon's acts of piety and repentance, and related that he had called all his people together to ask their pardon. "For what?" replied the Queen sharply; "he has placed and pensioned off all his servants; it was of the King and his brothers that the holy man you bewail should have asked pardon, for having paid so little attention to the education of Princes on whom the fate and happiness of twenty-five millions of men depend. Luckily," added she, "although they are still young, the King and his brothers have incessantly laboured to repair the errors of their preceptor."¹

Besides their Governor, the boys had tutors and undertutors. The head tutor, M. Coetlosquet, formerly Bishop of Limoges, was a sleepy, good-natured person, much more occupied with his breviary and with thoughts of future preferment, than with the duty of educating the three boys entrusted to his care. In fact, after the death of the Dauphin, who had insisted on a certain amount of discipline and of religious teaching, the Princes did exactly what they pleased.

This, in the case of the Comte d'Artois, meant that he refused to work at all, and no encouragement was given to the Comte de Provence, who was really anxious to learn. Great advantages were to be reaped

¹ Madame Campan's *Mémoires*, 1823 trans., vol. i. p. 119.

from a Prince's ignorance ; no one wished him to know and judge matters for himself. Therefore the Comte de Provence, who was determined to educate himself, lost at the age of fourteen or fifteen the popularity he had enjoyed in his childhood, and was looked on with general disfavour. He was ambitious, he laughed at his elder brother ; his only reason for wishing to study was his anxiety to fit himself for the throne.

When the Comte de Provence was fifteen years old, an event took place which was to exercise an enormous influence on his fortunes. In the endeavour to assure the permanence of the alliance between France and Austria concluded in Madame de Pompadour's time, Louis XV's Minister Choiseul determined to bring about a marriage between the Dauphin and an Austrian Princess. As a result of his negotiations, Marie Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria, was married to Louis Auguste, the future Louis XVI, in the chapel of Versailles on May 10, 1770. The fêtes after the wedding were magnificent, and in spite of the many enemies already lurking around her, every one at Court vied with each other in flattering and spoiling the fifteen-year-old Dauphine. The only cloud dimming the dazzling brightness of the young Princess's horizon, was her intense repugnance to acknowledging Madame du Barry's position as virtual Queen of the Court. The low-born adventuress was forced on her by the infatuated King on every possible occasion, and in spite of Marie Thérèse's constant admonitions, the proud young Princess found it almost impossible to be civil to her.

Another unperceived cause of future danger was the fact that the Comte de Provence, perhaps influenced by his Governor, who as a creature of the Du Barry's was

hostile to Choiseul, objected to an alliance with Austria, the hereditary enemy of France, and though outwardly cordial was not prepared to like his sister-in-law.

Madame du Barry, for her part, resented the contempt with which she was treated by the Dauphine, and when it was the turn of the Comte de Provence to be provided with a wife, she determined that the future Comtesse de Provence should, if possible, be closely attached to her triumphant chariot.

The Comte de Provence was not consulted about his own marriage. The bride chosen for him was Josephine Louise of Savoy, who, if it had not been for Choiseul's efforts to bring about the Austrian alliance, would most probably have become Dauphine.

Many intrigues were on foot before the future Comtesse de Provence arrived at the Court, and Madame du Barry drew up with the utmost care a list of the people who were to become members of the Princess's household, and who were selected among the partisans of the Royal Favourite. The chief lady of the bedchamber was Madame de Valentinois, one of Madame du Barry's first friends at Court, and the Comte de Modène, sworn ally of the Duc de Vauguyon, became Monsieur's gentleman-in-waiting. The household was arranged on exactly the same footing as that of the Dauphin and Marie Antoinette, and Madame du Barry determined to bring forward the Comtesse de Provence on all possible occasions, and to make her, if possible, Marie Antoinette's successful rival in the affections of the King, and therefore in the consideration of the Court.

The marriage took place in May 1773, when the Comte de Provence was eighteen years old, and the bride two years his senior. The bridegroom said

“yes” in so sonorous a voice that every one in church was astonished. His brother was childless, and he was in a hurry to be married. He performed his part in the ceremony with the grace and dignity which had already made him a prime favourite with the populace, in contradistinction to the Comte d’Artois, who shone in Court circles, but yawned at public ceremonies. In spite of the disorder in the finances, and the fact that Louis XV’s quarrel with the Parlements had so offended the Princes of the Blood that they refused to appear at the wedding, the affair was celebrated with the utmost magnificence, the fêtes, illuminations, orchestras, masked balls, and theatrical performances being almost as sumptuous as those which had celebrated the marriage of the heir to the French throne. Indeed, the fireworks in the great park at Versailles were the most remarkable that had ever been displayed in France.

Unfortunately, however, for the success of Madame du Barry’s intrigues, the Comtesse de Provence was so utterly insignificant, that it was impossible to think of her as a possible rival to the brilliant young Dauphine. “A pair of tolerably fine eyes obtained for the Comtesse de Provence upon her arrival at Versailles the only praises which could reasonably be bestowed on her,” says Madame Campan. She was totally wanting in a desire to please, and possessed no intellectual advantages to compensate for her lack of physical attractions. She was indeed so insignificant that Marie Antoinette, to whom the Court gossips had of course whispered news of the rôle marked out for her sister-in-law at Court, and who was therefore prepared to dislike and to fear her, soon felt no scruples in admitting her to her intimacy; and when later the circle was enlarged by the Comtesse de Provence’s sister becoming Comtesse

d'Artois, the three young Princesses were for a time almost inseparable. Matters were not indeed as harmonious as their smooth surface proclaimed, and serious dissensions, leading eventually to far-reaching consequences, would make their appearance before long ; but it was impossible to put the Comtesse de Provence into any prominent position, and it was only as her husband's tool that she was eventually to become the object of Marie Antoinette's bitter dislike.

Monsieur's disappointment must have been intense when he found himself with a wife so different in personality from his charming and popular sister-in-law—a wife who seemed as little likely to provide domestic delight as to help in forwarding political ambitions. However, even at the age of eighteen he was reasonable and self-controlled, and though he found that the Comtesse could not enter into his intellectual pursuits, he remembered that unity is strength, and that his interests and hers were on many points identical. Therefore he made a friend of his plain, dull little wife, and as—in spite of his enemies' assertions to the contrary—he was of an affectionate nature, he became to a certain extent attached to her ; and for the first few years of their married life they were an apparently happy couple. The lively Dauphine made fun of their supposed love for seclusion and for each other's society when, after the Comte had professed a predilection for winter and for his own fireside, she sent him a sketch by Fragonard representing him and the Comtesse sitting over the fire, in dressing-gowns and cotton caps, with muffs on their knees.

Several rather barren honours had in the meantime been granted to the Comte de Provence. In 1771 he was given the Colonelship of the Regiment of Provence,

though he was not allowed to visit his regiment, and in December 1773 he was installed in the Mastership of Saint-Lazare, and of Notre-Dame de Montcarmel. It had always been considered politic, while keeping those near the throne carefully in leading strings, to grant them from time to time harmless dignities.

On May 10, 1774, Louis XV breathed his last, and was succeeded by his grandson Louis XVI. The new King had no children, so the Comte de Provence, or Monsieur, as was now his title, became heir-presumptive to the throne of France.

CHAPTER II

The Comte de Provence as heir to the throne—Appearance, literary tastes—Supposed interview with Voltaire—Writings, political views, forced inactivity—His tour in France—Relations with Marie Antoinette. Accusations against him—Jealousies and resentments—Birth of Madame Royale—Birth of the first Dauphin—Monsieur no longer heir-apparent—Birth of the Duc de Normandie.

THE Comte de Provence now found himself in a position of the first importance—a position, too, which called for the utmost tact and diplomacy. The heirs-apparent to the French throne had good cause to curse the memory of the intriguing, irresponsible Gaston d'Orléans, Louis XIII's only brother, who had imbued the succeeding line of monarchs with a permanent distrust and terror of their possible machinations. In consequence, they were tied hand and foot, denied any position which involved power and influence, and kept in the background with the utmost severity. Monsieur was by nature timid and cautious, his artificial and confined life had kept him strangely ignorant on many practical subjects, but nevertheless he possessed real diplomatic talent which needed only time and opportunity for development, and it was maddening to be kept in a state of inaction while some one utterly incapable mismanaged matters at the helm.

In appearance Monsieur to a certain extent resembled Louis XVI. Like him he inherited the aquiline nose, round face with the heavy jowl, short



MONSIEUR FRÈRE DU ROI,

Né le 17 Novembre 1755.

Doux, prudent, sage et debonnaire,
A la philosophie il joint la vérité;
Il a les vertus de son frère,
Et s'il n'a pas le Sceptre, il a la majesté.

Lutene

From an engraving by Verité.

THE COMTE DE PROVENCE.

(Afterwards Louis XVIII.)

chin, and retreating forehead so often characteristic of the Bourbons. In spite, however, of the inelegance caused by premature stoutness, and the fact that even as a comparatively young man his walk resembled a waddle, he was distinctly good-looking, and—unlike his elder brother—extremely dignified. His complexion was white and clear, his hair fair, and his slightly open and smiling mouth gave an air of affability to his countenance. It was not a strong face, and a certain weakness would show itself in his later life when action was needed, though never when the passive courage of endurance was required. Then his fortitude was unflinching; he was always cheerful, hopeful, and buoyant. In this, as well as in his other qualities and limitations, there was something feminine; indeed, an unfriendly observer remarked at this time that the young Prince reminded him of an old woman.

Though rather fond of jests and stories of a Rabelaisian flavour, the Comte de Provence was a charming, witty conversationalist. His character was not heavy, in spite of the fact that his serene blue eyes sometimes assumed a slightly vacuous expression. The serenity which was one of his most marked characteristics, and never forsook him even in the times of blackest misfortune, was slightly irritating at this period of his life. It was considered a proof of dissimulation; and as it was combined with a mocking spirit and a certain theatricality of manner which never forsook him all his life, the effect of his personality on the average courtier was disconcerting and repellent.

Monsieur posed a good deal at this period of his life; indeed, it is difficult to see how any one with his character and in his position—surrounded by

malign criticism, bound with a thousand fetters, doomed to inaction when he longed, not for big schemes, possibly, but to work, to agitate, and to do after his own fashion—could be natural. According to Court opinion, he was cold, cynical, and heartless, a mocker and intriguer, who calculated everything to his own advantage.

His conduct was most disadvantageously compared with that of his brother Artois, who worshipped many women, gambled for enormous stakes, walked on a tight rope before the Royal Family ; and with his good looks and delightful manner was the beau idéal of what a dashing young Prince of the Ancien Régime should be. Events would teach him nothing, he would be gay and irresponsible—a child to the end. Surely one can hardly join in the chorus of those who blamed Monsieur violently for his knowledge of his own superiority to this feather-brained younger brother, as well as to the poor King, of whom in the stress and storm of Revolution, when immediate action was imperative, his Minister said sadly that he might have been talking to him of the affairs of the Emperor of China instead of his own, so impossible was it to pierce his dull indifference.¹

The Comte de Provence, however, suffered from one great disadvantage. Women disliked him. His compliments had not the true ring of passion ; he was a pedant, a mocker, a cynic. In that corrupt Court his respectable life did not stand him in good stead ; it merely proved his indifference and insensibility to women's charms. He would "talk to you quite calmly of the flames and fires of love, at eighteen years of age, as he would have talked of the ice of the Antarctic Pole,

¹ *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. iii. p. 30.

or of the frigidity of the Pole,"¹ cries the writer of Madame de Créquy's memoirs indignantly. In the realm of thought he took the fashionable side. He was a philosopher, and he admired Voltaire, who was disliked by the King and Queen. An account, probably apocryphal,² is given of a secret visit paid by him to the old philosopher when, before the Revolution, the latter came to Paris. We are told that Voltaire received his Royal guest—who was supposed to be unknown to him—in a dressing-gown of blue brocade covered with gold and silver flowers, his head covered by a cotton cap, while over that he wore a velvet and fur cap which had been presented to him by Catherine II. His eyes were brilliant with the light of malice and of genius, the thin pale lips of his toothless mouth were broadened in a sardonic smile, his aquiline nose approached his pointed and prominent chin, and his hollow cheeks and wrinkled brown skin gave him a corpse-like aspect.

To this strange old figure, the spirit hardly covered with body, of a man so eager for truth and reality in an artificial world, that in his detestation of shams he had discarded with them mankind's most inspiring ideals, enter Monsieur, plump, well-liking, well satisfied with himself, dignified, and slightly theatrical, the type of that old world so soon to pass away. It was the meeting of youth and age; yet, by a strange antithesis, age on this occasion represented what was new, and youth what was old, decrepit, and decaying. According to the story, the two had a long conversation, and in the course of it Monsieur asked Voltaire,

¹ *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy*, vol. v. p. 37.

² *Memoirs of Louis XVIII*, Lamothe-Langon. These supposed memoirs are not trustworthy.

“ You find Paris much changed during your absence ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, “ its inhabitants begin to think, and I hope that before long they will begin to act.”

In a frivolous Court, Monsieur’s love of literature was imputed to him as a crime. A Prince of the Blood should not resemble a schoolmaster ! He prided himself on knowing everything ; he studied, he translated Horace, he wrote verses. Sometimes these were rather pretty, as in the case of the couplet he sent to the Queen with a fan of “ exquisite taste and magnificence,” after he had had the misfortune to break hers, and she had said laughingly that she must apply to the empty Exchequer for a new one.

“ Au milieu des chaleurs extrêmes,
Heureux d’occuper vos loisirs,
J’aurai soin près de vous d’amener les zéphirs,
Les amours y viendront d’eux-mêmes.”

This couplet had an enormous success, and afterwards the King always talked of applying to “ my brother the poet ” whenever a speech or manifesto was in process of composition.

Monsieur studied the intricacies of style, and could write excellent parodies. He loved to puzzle and mislead people, and besides the enigmas he composed for sometimes unappreciative friends, he would occasionally invent elaborate mystifications which he sent to the *Mercure de France*. One of these gave the account of an imaginary trial in which the Custom House at Marseilles sued the Consul at Alexandria for damages. The Consul had sent to France a case of crocodiles’ eggs. These had hatched on the way, and when the case was opened the crocodiles jumped out and tried to devour the officials. This joke was highly successful, as to Monsieur’s delight the *Journal*

des Savans was much interested in the matter, and discoursed learnedly on it.

Another of Monsieur's imaginings has a certain political significance. In 1784 he published a pamphlet, of which this is part of the title, "Historical Description of a Symbolical Monster, taken alive on the borders of the lake Faqua."

This monster, which possessed the feet of an ostrich, the horns of a buffalo, the tail of a monkey, and the mane of a lion, devastated the fair land of France, till it was caught and carried off to Spain. Monsieur offered the picture of this monster "to the lovers of truth and of their country, and to the enemies of tyranny and oppression. The honest man may read without fear, but whoever thinks he sees his portrait in the monster whose description he has read, reads it, tears it, throws it into the fire. No matter; the picture is made, or at least begun."

This was written at a later date than the time we are considering, when the only step Monsieur had taken in politics was decidedly reactionary. He was a strong partisan of military authority, and he scoffed at the Economists, and at Turgot; and did his best to oppose the measures brought forward by that great reformer. Necker also fell under his disapproval, and many of the most violent pamphlets against the measures of reform attempted by these two Ministers, were written either by Monsieur or at his dictation, and were printed at the private printing-press in his Palace.

Monsieur also opposed the re-establishment of the old "Parlements," which, after continual battlings with the Royal authority, had been abolished by Louis XV in 1771; and he begged Louis XVI not to disavow

his grandfather's victory. On this occasion Turgot took the same side as he, knowing that the "Parlements" were often obstructions to measures which were *for* the public weal as well as against it. Monsieur no doubt did not look on the matter from this extended point of view, and only considered the recall of the tiresome, turbulent "Parlements" as a sign of Royal weakness.

On this occasion he sent a Memorial to Louis XVI, in which he said: "The reintegrated Parlements will act against the interests of the State, the people, and the King, and while disobeying, will declare they do not disobey. The population will come to their aid, and the Royal authority will succumb one day, crushed by the weight of their resistance."¹

Memorials and pamphlets were the only outlet for Monsieur's energies, as Maurepas, Louis XVI's First Minister, had taken good care that he should not have a seat on the Council, so that he had no voice in the direction of public affairs. Therefore, as he wrote to his friend Gustavus III of Sweden: "I rage with all my heart against the uselessness in which they leave me, but try to be patient, and to live in hope."²

Monsieur never forgave Maurepas, about whose subserviency to his wife he makes fun in the satire called "Dream of M. de Maurepas, or the Puppets of the French Government." He says of Turgot in the same pamphlet: "There was in France a stupid, clumsy, heavy man, with more roughness than decision, more obstinacy than firmness." Above all he hated Choiseul, the instigator of that ill-fated Austrian

¹ *Biographie Universelle*, vol. lxxii. p. 114.

² *Geffroy Gustave III et La Cour de France*, vol. i. p. 294. Letter, March 29, 1777.

marriage. In fact Monsieur was bitterly in opposition at this period of his life, and detested all the King's Ministers. It was intensely galling, with a consciousness of his own unused capacity for government, to be perforce ignorant of matters on which the men he considered servants to his brother were well informed; and to save his pride before the courtiers, he would often pretend knowledge where he was totally ignorant. The situation must have been maddening to one of his calibre; and it was naturally hardly consoling when the Comte d'Artois' incapacity for a seat on the Council was cited to him as a reason for his own exclusion. In vain Monsieur tried the most eloquent—though perhaps specious—reasoning, and told the King that it would be highly expedient for him to have on the Council another self whose interests could not be separated from his, and who would help to discover any snares held out to him.¹ Perhaps if Louis had trusted his brother, and, instead of making an enemy of him, had allowed him a voice in the management of affairs, in the troublous days to come, his and the Queen's lives might have been spared. Brotherly affection might in this case have proved wiser than policy; for there is no doubt that, considering the respective abilities of Louis XVI and Monsieur, it was prudent for the King's Ministers to keep the latter from any participation in State affairs.

Therefore, except for his love of literature, he had no outlet for his energies but in the round of constant frivolities considered proper to a "Son of France." He went to balls, wore a coat covered with diamonds which had cost two millions of francs,² and acted

¹ *Mémoires Secrètes Petit de Buchaumont*, vol. xxviii, p. 163.

² *Correspondance Secrète Lescure*, vol. i, p. 56.

occasionally in Marie Antoinette's theatricals, where—unlike the other amateur actors—he always knew his part. We hear of him also as playing for high stakes at Marly on an occasion when the Queen won ten thousand francs, and was enabled to pay her milliner, the Comtesse de Provence won twenty-five thousand, and it is recorded that Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois won also! Monsieur, however, soon realised the folly of these proceedings; and though gambling went on among his household, he ceased to be noted for high play, as were the Queen and the Comte d'Artois.

We hear also among Monsieur's occupations that of designing a simple yet effective uniform to wear during a tour he was to make in France. This tour was an important matter, as Monsieur among other places visited Orléans, Blois, Tours, Bordeaux, Montpellier, and Nîmes, laid himself out to be agreeable wherever he went, and was received with the utmost enthusiasm. Madame de la Marck, writing to Gustavus III, speaks thus of this journey: "Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois have just been travelling in our provinces, as such people do travel, with an enormous expense, and devastating everything on their way. Monsieur has become as big as a barrel."¹ The French aristocracy were certainly outspoken in their comments on Royalty.

Monsieur for his part much enjoyed the tour, and the enthusiasm with which he was greeted. Above all things he was anxious to be popular.

It was on this journey that the Prince first came into contact with the venomous Montgaillard, who would in the future betray his cause, and vilify him

¹ *Geffroy Gustavus III et La Cour de France*, vol. i. p. 286.

in a most untrustworthy volume of Recollections. Monsieur, magnificent, bland, and dignified, in all the array and pomp of eighteenth-century Royalty, visited the Collège at Sorèze, where Montgaillard was presented to him as the most promising pupil. The Prince asked him to translate Horace's Ode beginning "Eheu fugales Posthume," and the boy began with the utmost fluency; but burst into tears when he reached the words "Linquenda tellus et domus et placens uxor." (Earth and home and pleasant wife must be left.) Monsieur, astonished, asked the reason for his trouble, and Montgaillard murmured timidly in a voice broken with sobs: "It is because I dare not tell the Prince that he must some day die." Monsieur smiled at his admirer's naïve adoration, and asked the boy whether he would like to become his page, to which query Montgaillard gave a timid assent.

In the evening the Prince went to see the Natural History Collection, accompanied by his page. Petrified blocks of stone extracted from the Black Mountains were on a table, and some of them were shaped like hearts. "Oh," cried Monsieur, striking the stones, "here are some very hard hearts; I did not expect to find any here."

"Monseigneur," answered Montgaillard, "they are the only ones which are not softened by your presence."

"Why, it is my little page of the morning. He is really charming. This pupil will do well," said Monsieur, kissing the young courtier.¹

Monsieur was never considered lavish with his money, which he generally spent in acquiring land in different provinces of France, with the object, the

¹ P. 9, Introduction to *Souvenirs du Comte de Montgaillard*, Clément de Lacroix.

malevolent whispered, of increasing his popularity and importance. Gambling was a far more legitimate employment for the money pertaining to a Prince of the Blood than prudent investments, which might indeed be said to savour of bourgeois economy.

He was well housed at this period of his life. He had acquired and enlarged Brunoy, a magnificent country house near Choisy, where he entertained the Royal Family most magnificently, and gave theatrical performances of doubtful taste, for Monsieur, though respectable in life, was far from straitlaced in his tastes, and enjoyed Rabelaisian plays and anecdotes; and on January 8, 1779, the King presented him with the Luxembourg Palace, which in the past had been the habitation of the Grande Mademoiselle. The Luxembourg is surrounded by large grounds, and towards the end of Louis XIV's reign a second sumptuous mansion, known as "le petit Luxembourg," had been built in them. Here the Comte and Comtesse de Provence took up their abode whenever they were in town.

Their relations with the Queen varied, but were generally unfriendly, in spite of the apparent amity implied by constant companionship; in fact Monsieur's hostility to the unfortunate Marie Antoinette was so marked, that he is sometimes supposed to have helped to cause the calamities which were in the end stepping-stones for his ambition.

The Comte de Provence was indeed in the ungraceful position of profiting by the misfortunes of the woman whom he disliked; but even if he be credited in that ante-revolutionary time with the cold-blooded wickedness which is assumed by this view—a wickedness to which the rest of his life gives sufficient

denial—it is difficult to invest him with a prophetic vision which discerned at the beginning of the Revolution the tragic end thereof. Ambitious he certainly was, anxious at one time to become Regent, and to govern instead of his incapable brother, indignant, furious, that by the stupidity of that brother, and what he considered the unpardonable frivolity and want of dignity of the Queen, the fortunes of the whole family were imperilled. For it must be remembered that the deeply seated causes of the French Revolution, and the magnitude it would in the future attain, were alike unknown to him.

What is one of the reproaches brought against the Comte de Provence in his early days as *Émigré*? He had no knowledge of the world, he fed himself on ridiculous illusions. That is to say that, though dazed by the catastrophe which had hurled him out of France, it was impossible for him to realise the strength of the Revolution, or to imagine that France could possibly exist without the Bourbons; and it was only the wearying experience of continual disappointments, which at last taught him the bitter lesson that the creed professed by his family was out of date.

His almost childish inconsequence at that time, is wholly inconsistent with the Machiavellian genius which is supposed to have inspired him in the early days of the Revolution.

He was without doubt intensely irritated with Marie Antoinette, the proud Austrian woman who flouted her sisters-in-law, and mocked at the etiquette which was to him a religion; and he joined in the cry against her—considering her influence pernicious, possibly suspecting her morals, certainly objecting to her extravagance.

It is difficult not to allow that he had some justification for his point of view, however mistaken it may have been. For it must be remembered that in her youth Marie Antoinette was not a wise woman; had not even the good sense to follow with docility the counsels of her mother, and the warnings of her mother's Ambassador. In the end Marie Thérèse turned away in despair and said no more; tired of giving advice which was of no avail.

The young Queen meanwhile went gaily on her way, amusing herself with dress, flirtations, and gambling for high stakes—amusements which necessitated constant calls on an empty Exchequer, and caused the Comte de Provence to bestow on her the nickname of “Madame Deficit.” She chose as her companion to places of entertainment the dissipated young Comte d’Artois; she allowed herself to be treated with a want of ceremony in public which was in utter defiance of what was then considered seemly for Royalty; she went out at night to places of amusement without the King, and she returned from one of these evening expeditions in a hackney carriage. Did it never occur to her that, in a Court where an utter want of morality was cloaked with a minute attention to outward propriety, her reckless disregard of “les convenances” would be construed as a desire for licence?

Marie Antoinette's beauty, her charm, and her tragic end—indeed, her tragic life; for was it not a misfortune for a woman of quickness and liveliness of mind to be tied to such a man as Louis XVI?—have gained her a host of adorers, who have accorded her the most whole-hearted admiration. Even the dull, heavy Louis XVI has received a halo from the scaffold. In the romance of their history the Comte de Provence

lurks in the background—an indefinite yet baleful figure, with whose standpoint little sympathy is felt. Therefore it seems fair—though it may be an ungracious task—to look at matters for a moment with his eyes, and to realise that it may not have been wholly ambition and malice which caused him to consider Marie Antoinette a danger to the State. High-minded and magnanimous silence as to his sister-in-law's mistakes would no doubt have been more admirable than the course he took, but in the inaction to which he was condemned rankling trifles assumed an undue importance.

A feeling of dislike between the two young families had doubtless begun when, in Louis XV's time, the Comte de Provence was brought forward by the Du Barry faction as rival to his elder brother, and was under the influence of his Governor, Vauguyon, who detested the Austrian alliance. Mercy Argenteau, Marie Antoinette's adviser and mentor, was then most distrustful of the young Prince, whom he considered "inclined to intrigue, self-interest, and extreme dissimulation."¹ He therefore took much pains to put Marie Antoinette on her guard against her brother-in-law, particularly when the latter for a time appeared inclined to leave the Du Barry faction, and showed anxiety to ally himself with his sister-in-law. Then every one's suspicions were aroused, and it was in vain that Marie Antoinette protested that in her interviews with the Comte de Provence the only matters discussed were plans for forthcoming amusements.

"I am very glad," writes Marie Thérèse to Mercy, "that she [Marie Antoinette] should live on good

¹ Arneth, *Marie Antoinette Correspondance*, Mercy Argenteau to Marie Thérèse, June 22, 1771.

terms with her brother-in-law ; but I am not of opinion that she should confide too much in him, nor become too intimate with him. This Prince seems to me false, and as he is better looking than the Dauphin, and as courtly as the other is rough, the comparison my daughter might make between the two would not perhaps be to her husband's advantage."

Therefore, distrust of her brother-in-law was carefully inculcated on the young Princess, and when Louis XVI came to the throne, this distrust was increased by the discovery among Louis XV's papers of letters from the Comte and Comtesse de Provence, which proved that their private communications to the King did not tally with the views they held in conversation with the rest of the Royal Family. Both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were indignant at this apparent duplicity ; and when shortly afterwards the Royal Family performed *Tartuffe*, and the Comte de Provence took the title rôle, the King said : "That has been acted to perfection ; the characters each played the part that was natural to them."¹

Louis XVI and Monsieur often disagreed, and we hear, before the former came to the throne, of several unseemly struggles taking place between the brothers. On one occasion we read that "a very beautiful piece of china stood on M. le Comte de Provence's mantel-piece. When M. le Dauphin came into the room he was in the habit of examining and fingering this piece of china. This behaviour seemed to cause M. le Comte de Provence uneasiness, and one day, while Madame la Dauphine was laughing at him about his nervousness, M. le Dauphin, who was holding the

¹ Arneth, *Marie Antoinette Correspondance*, Mercy Argenteau to Marie Thérèse, June 28, 1774.

piece of china in question, let it fall, and it was broken into fragments. M. le Comte de Provence, in his first indignation, rushed at M. le Dauphin ; they took each other by the collar and gave each other several fisticuffs. Madame la Dauphine, much embarrassed by this scene, had sufficient presence of mind to separate the combatants, and herself received a scratch on the hand. A complete reconciliation followed immediately on the quarrel ; no one had witnessed it.”¹

In the future the Comte de Provence would watch with helpless indignation his brother's clumsy handling of things more important, yet quite as fragile as china, and would avenge himself by bitter words and satirical pamphlets instead of honest fist-play. There were excuses for him ; he was sorely tried by his forced inactivity, while the vessel of the State foundered, and his only available weapons were a sharp tongue and ready pen.

There is no doubt that Monsieur joined with his aunts in abusing the Queen on every possible occasion, and that the Court of the old Princesses, to which he was a constant visitor, was a centre of criticism of the Queen. Louis XV's daughters were horrified at their niece's frivolity and want of dignity ; they were jealous, too, of her growing power over her husband, who had at the beginning of his married life seemed quite indifferent to her. It was hard for Madame Adelaïde, who had always shown special fondness for her godson Louis XVI, and who during the early years of his reign had exercised much influence over him, to feel her power on the wane before that of “l'Autrichienne,” who in her opinion thought of nothing but her own amusement, and was ruining the State by her extravagance ; but the

¹ Arneth, *Marie Antoinette Correspondance*, Mercy Argenteau to Marie Thérèse, June 15, 1772.

elder lady completely destroyed her own ascendancy over the King when, possibly as the spokesman of the rest of the Royal Family, she submitted to him a list of accusations against his wife, and begged that she might be sent back to Austria. Even after the rebuff she received on this occasion, she continued to vilify Marie Antoinette, whom she might have spared, one would think, from love and loyalty to her nephew.

On March 6, 1785, it was considered necessary to abrogate the law which exempted the libraries of Monsieur, of the Comte d'Artois, and of the Duc d'Orléans from Government inspection, as it was discovered that many libels were printed there. This was no doubt a wise though tardy measure, as the Revolutionaries must have put unscrutinised printing-presses to good use; but because Monsieur had a pretty taste in satire it is hardly fair to credit him—any more than the Comte d'Artois—with cognisance of all that was illicitly printed under his roof.

The private theatricals in which Marie Antoinette took part caused many heartburnings among the Royal Family; and although the performances were strictly private, and the only spectators were the Royal Family, the Comte de Provence was greatly shocked at the Queen taking part in them, and would not allow his wife to do so. When asked by the Queen to act, the Comtesse de Provence answered with dignity that “it would not be befitting to her rank.”

“I act,” said the Queen haughtily; “I who am Queen, and the daughter of an Empress.”

“If I am not Queen,” retorted the Comtesse, “I am of the blood from which queens are made.”¹

¹ Todièrre, *Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette et le Comte de Provence en face de la Révolution*, vol. i, p. 429.

This dispute caused a coldness for some time between the Queen and her sister-in-law, and Marie Antoinette refused to come to a magnificent fête the Comtesse de Provence was giving at Brunoy.

“ Well,” said Madame du Barry to M. de Montesquieu, Monsieur’s first equerry, “ when does the fête take place ? ”

“ It takes place the day after to-morrow ; but I must tell you that we shall not see the Queen at it.”

“ Is that possible ? ”

“ They have worked so well on her mind, and turned the head of the King so cleverly, that he will not go, nor allow her Majesty to go without him.”

“ But there will be a horrible scandal ! All France will know that there is discord in the Royal Family.”

“ No, Monsieur’s wisdom has settled everything. As soon as he knew of his brother’s and sister-in-law’s refusal he went to the King, represented to him the importance of drawing a veil over these domestic quarrels, and said to him, ‘ Sire, since neither you nor the Queen will honour the fête by your presence, neither the Comtesse d’Artois nor Madame will appear at it. Please arrange things so that they and the Queen all three show themselves on that day in the same box at the Opera. That will be the way of preventing rumours injurious to every one.’ ”¹

Monsieur carried the work of hoodwinking the public still further, and after inducing the King to promise to come on the second day, he announced that the theatrical performances at his fête were intended for men alone ; indeed, they were of such a nature that they caused a certain amount of scandal.²

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Barry*, vol. v. chap. iii.

² Dubois-Corneau, *Le Comte de Provence à Brunoy*, p. 155.

Later, Monsieur gave a magnificent fête at Brunoy in proof of reconciliation with his sister-in-law. Everything at the entertainment—which cost fifteen hundred thousand louis—was designed to do homage to the Queen. In the first copse she visited she found knights in full armour asleep under the trees, supposed to be doomed to lethargy by the absence of the beauties who had incited their comrades of the olden time to valour. At the appearance of the Queen they awoke, melodious voices sang the cause of their disenchantment, and they descended into a magnificently decorated arena to signalise their skill and valour. In the splendid tournament which followed, the Queen's colours were always triumphant, and the entertainment was continued with a play, a ballet, and a ball, while there were also brilliant fireworks and illuminations. “Finally, from a prodigiously high scaffold, placed on a rising ground, the words ‘Vive Louis! Vive Marie Antoinette!’ were shown in the air, in the midst of a very dark but calm night.”¹ The Queen evidently appreciated the flattery implied in this entertainment, for it was remarked that for a short time after it she was rather less cold to Monsieur and Madame than it was her wont to be, in spite of Monsieur's constant politeness.

We hear of other passages-at-arms between the Queen and her brothers and sisters-in-law on the respective antiquity of the Bourbon and Hapsburg families; and once, if our chronicler can be trusted, the Comtesse de Provence made a thrust which may have rankled. Marie Antoinette's younger brother, the Archduke Maximilian, had paid a visit to Paris, and had had a dispute on etiquette with the Princes of the Blood, in which the Queen had supported him.

¹ Trans. *Campan Mémoires*, 1884, vol. i. p. 190.

“Mesdames,” she cried in angry sarcasm to her sisters-in-law, “how proud we little Princesses should feel at having obtained the honour of entering the ancient House of France !”

“Ah, Madame,” answered the Comtesse de Provence, “that House and ours have for so long been in alliance that I feel as though we were only one !”¹

These disputes were on trifling subjects ; but there is no doubt that they proceeded from a deep-seated jealousy on both sides. Marie Antoinette, in fact, made no secret of her dislike for her brothers-in-law. During the illness of the Comte d’Artois, who was the constant companion of her amusements, every one remarked with surprise on her indifference to his welfare ; and she told her mother’s Ambassador that she took no interest in him whatever, a reflection Mercy Argenteau begged her to keep to herself. He goes on, “and I urged the Queen most insistently that she should not express herself with so much freedom on her indifference for Monsieur. When this Prince fell ill the Queen allowed herself to make some remarks which showed that she would be very little affected by whatever might happen to him. It is true that the King, for his part, has not shown on this occasion the slightest sign of affection for his brothers.”²

The Queen’s remarks were no doubt repeated with spicy additions to her brother-in-law, and cannot have increased his love for her.

In 1778 a bitter blow fell on Monsieur. It became apparent that the Queen would soon become a mother :

¹ Lamothe-Langon, *Mémoires de Louis XVIII.*

² Arneth, *Marie Antoinette Correspondance*, Mercy Argenteau to Marie Thérèse, vol. ii. p. 467.

that she was, as she cried triumphantly, "at last really Queen of France!"

Therefore Monsieur would in a short time be no longer heir-apparent; and the blow fell also on the Comte d'Artois and his two sons, the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berry, whose coming into the world poor Marie Antoinette had attended with outward joy and serenity, but with a sorrow in her heart of which she unburdens herself in her letters to her mother.

Monsieur felt the change in his position most bitterly. However, on October 5, 1778, he wrote very sensibly to his friend Gustavus III :¹

"You know," he says, "the change in my fortune. It has produced no change in my heart, nor in your heart, I am sure. I can tell you truthfully, in the words of Zamore, 'Formerly at your feet I laid my empire.' You were the friend of a man who might some day be useful to you by his power. I have now nothing more to offer you than a tender and faithful heart, but I do it in friendship. You perhaps will think from these words that I am in despair at this reverse; I can, however, assure you that it is not so. I feel it—that I do not hide from you; but reason, and perhaps a little philosophy, and confidence in God, have come to my help, have supported me, and made me take my line with proper dignity. I became master of my exterior very quickly, and I have always held the same conduct as formerly, without showing a joy which would have been considered hypocrisy—as it would have been—for, speaking candidly, I feel none, as you can well imagine; nor a sadness, which would have been attributed to weakness of soul. The inner feelings have been more difficult to conquer. They

¹ Geffroy, *Gustavus III et La Cour de France*.

still assert themselves sometimes ; but with the help of the three aids I have mentioned to you I at least control them, if I cannot altogether overcome them. I saw very well that people tried to probe me at the beginning of the Queen's pregnancy, and I have avoided this with care. The only answer that has been drawn from me is this. I was very much pressed to explain myself on the subject by a lady whom I know very well, and with whom I am much connected in society, but am not on a footing of intimacy or confidence. I said to her, 'Deus dedit, Deus abstulit, fiat voluntas Domini' ('God gave, God took away ; God's will be done'), and since that time I have not been further questioned. In truth, a year ago I should certainly have said, like Charles XII, 'Deus dedit, diabolus non abstollet a me' ('God gave, the devil shall not take away').

However, it was a girl, the future Madame d'Angoulême, for whom the Comte de Provence was to feel paternal affection, who came into the world on December 19, 1778, and the Comte de Provence wrote to Gustavus III :¹ "When my niece came into the world, I allow I was very glad." He adds, however, "My sister-in-law did things very well this time, but it is to be feared that the matter may not go so satisfactorily on some future occasion."

It was remarked, and the spiteful made malevolent comments on the fact, that when the Comte de Provence took the place of the King of Spain as godfather to the infant Princess, and was asked to name her, he insisted on the observance of the ritual which enjoined that the names of the child's parents should first be given. Monsieur was always a strict observer of etiquette, and

¹ Geffroy, *Gustave III et La Cour de France*.

the utterly gratuitous supposition that he meant to insinuate that the Princess was not his brother's child, seems absurdly malicious.

On October 22, 1781, a further misfortune befell Monsieur in the birth of the first Dauphin, who, saved from the misery to come, was to fade away when France was opening her new era with the States-General. "Dear me, Papa," said the little Duc d'Angoulême, when he saw the baby for the first time, "how little my cousin is!" "Yes, child," answered the Comte d'Artois caustically; "but the time will come when you will find him quite sufficiently big!"¹

On March 27, 1785, the family was completed by the birth of another boy, known during the lifetime of his brother as the Duc de Normandie, and in the future as the captive King Louis XVII.

¹ *Mémoires de Louis XVIII*, trans. Lamothe-Langon, vol. ii. p. 234.

CHAPTER III

Madame de Balbi—Her influence over Monsieur, its political effect
—Public affairs—The assembly of notables—Monsieur at the head
of a Bureau—Calonne's fall—Monsieur at the Cour des Comptes
—His popularity, his speech to Necker—The States-General.

MEANWHILE an important event had taken place in the Comte de Provence's life—he had for the first time fallen under a woman's influence.

Surrounded by enemies who watched every shade of change in his countenance, and every tiny detail in his life, interpreted them maliciously, and invented as pleased their malicious fancy where it was impossible to chronicle, his loneliness must have been great; especially as his only ally was a delicate, unpleasing wife, two years older than himself, who suffered an utter want of self-control which showed itself in many peculiarities, and who at the best of times was no companion for a witty, intelligent man of letters. Her one idea of correct behaviour, was to observe the minutæ of etiquette with a strictness which made Monsieur's Court dull and constrained. He loved witty conversation, it was his great recreation—the one pastime of a man who had been delicate, almost infirm, from his childhood, and the greater part of whose life was spent in drawing-rooms.

One day a charming child was brought to Court by her father, M. de Caumont, who held the position of first Gentleman of the Chamber to the Comte de

Provence, while his wife was "Gouvernante" to the children of the Comte d'Artois.

Owing to the position held by her parents, Anne Jacobé de Caumon La Force, a member of an old and illustrious family, was very early allowed to frequent the Court, where from the first her presence was a great addition to its gaiety. The poor dull Comtesse de Provence was fascinated by her originality, vivacity, and droll repartees. At first she was looked on merely as a plaything by the Princess, but as she grew older, and her bright laughing eyes, beautiful figure, brilliancy, and merriment made her a conspicuous personage, Madame became very anxious to attach her permanently to her Court. There were difficulties about doing this, as no vacancy was at that time to be found among Madame's maids of honour. However, Anne de Caumont had become absolutely necessary to the Comtesse, who worked energetically for her favourite; and on M. de Caumont's death, when his daughter was fifteen years old, a pension of 5,000 livres was obtained for her, and in 1779 she was made one of Madame's attendant ladies.

By this time she had become Madame de Balbi, having on April 28, 1776, married the Comte de Balbi, a Genoese of noble birth, Colonel of the regiment of the Bourbon Infanterie. The marriage of the beautiful and brilliant girl of eighteen to the good-looking young soldier of twenty-four caused much excitement at Court, and the King and Queen and all the members of the Royal Family were present at the wedding.

On December 21, 1778, a son was born to the young couple. Madame de Balbi was a woman whose chronicles were destined to be eventful, for little more than a year after this occurrence it was announced that

the Comte de Balbi had suddenly gone mad, and that his wife was to be separated from him. Much scandal was in circulation about the event—it must be remembered, in justice to Madame de Balbi, that nothing happened to any person of prominence in France at that time which did not give rise to the vilest gossip—and according to one story in circulation, M. de Balbi was to be shut up as insane because he had discovered that his wife was unfaithful to him. Part of this story is undoubtedly false ; as from the evidence given by the doctors who examined him, the Comte de Balbi was certainly mad, and had suffered from hallucinations for some time. The stories reflecting on Madame de Balbi's honour were certainly not believed by the Comte and Comtesse de Provence, with both of whom she continued high in favour ; but comments reflecting on her both now and later appear so persistently in the Memoirs of the time, that, taking these in conjunction with the dark blot on her later life, I think we may assume without an undue want of charity that, if not guilty on this occasion, she was at any rate a coquette, of whom evil might easily be believed.

No doubt this coquetry was particularly fascinating when contrasted with the absolute ignorance of the art of pleasing shown by the Comtesse de Provence, and Monsieur soon became charmed with his wife's attendant. Her intelligence was keen, she took much interest in public affairs, treated every subject she touched on with delightful vivacity and quickness, understood the slightest hint, laughed gaily, and related stories to perfection. Perhaps she was a little wanting in womanly softness, but the Comte de Provence was, as we know, rather soft and feminine himself, and would therefore not miss this quality.

Her very impulsiveness, her fits of passion when her will was crossed—and, forgetting her own interests, she would abuse any one and every one in her anger—were, as contrasted with his own nature, additional attractions to a man who, even when witty, was a little ponderous, and to whom it was easier to conceal his thoughts than to express them with openness.

Madame de Balbi was soon the centre of the Luxembourg Court ; conversation with her became Monsieur's chief delight and pastime, while Madame still showed a fondness for her which excited the ridicule of the malicious. She was installed in a luxurious apartment in the Luxembourg Palace, where Madame was now living, and was allowed to have her baby with her. Her husband, whom she did not ever trouble to see again, was settled with an establishment befitting his rank and fortune at the Hospice in the little town of Senlis, where he lived till his death in 1835.

The Vicomte de Reiset thus describes the fascinating Madame de Balbi¹ : “ Her portrait, which I owe to the obliging amiability of her great-nephew the Duc de la Force, represents her in a lawn dress, with laughing lips, mocking eyes, and a wilful air. Her expression is brilliant with the fire of passion, and her whole physiognomy is instinct with intelligence, ardour, and strength of will. The delicacy of the slightly turned up nose, the dimples which indent the round cheeks, all seem to minister to the perfection of this fresh and delightful face. With her slender fingers, she crosses over her half-bare neck a fichu of white gauze which does not wholly cover a small space of white shoulder, a poppy-coloured ribbon only partially keeps back the abundant masses of her bright brown hair. Looking

¹ *Comtesse de Balbi*, p. 15.

at this portrait with its impress at once of coquetry and want of constraint, it is easy to realise the power of a woman in whom were united so many attractions and so much intellect, who joined so much seductive grace to such roguery and tenacity."

Madame de Balbi was not only a plaything and amusement to the Comte de Provence, she was also a counsellor and a companion, with whom all the affairs of life, both public and private, were discussed. She has been called an intriguer, and it is at least noteworthy that from the time of his connection with her, Monsieur's political attitude altered entirely. Though proud and dignified, he had always coveted popularity with the people, but hitherto he had been the enemy of reform as practised by Turgot and Necker, had opposed the return of the "Parlements" who were the great bulwark against the Royal authority, and had taken up the position known as reactionary. Henceforth, however, he would—though in a timid and hesitating fashion and with many scruples—assume for a time the popular side, would show by his moderation, good sense, and undoubted political cleverness that had he wielded the sceptre, France might have been saved from her worst excesses ; and would only be shocked and startled back to his former principles when the Revolution, rolling in like a great flood, swept the Bourbon family out of power, country, and, in several cases, out of life altogether.

Meanwhile, during the thirteen years that Louis XVI had been on the throne, the state of financial affairs had been a despairing problem, for which each Controller-General in turn had tried vainly to find a solution. Calonne, the Comte d'Artois' favourite, had come into office as Controller-General in 1783, and

had hastened the catastrophe by boundless extravagance, while he concealed the tragic condition of the Exchequer by a financial policy composed of ceaseless expedients and underhand transactions.

However, after three years of these lighthearted methods, which seemed for a time to have brought back a gleam of prosperity to France, it was evident that the end was approaching, for no ready money could be found even to pay the interest of the National Debt, and the spectre of State bankruptcy drew alarmingly near.

It was impossible to impose more taxes on the lower classes, so Calonne, having exhausted his specious resources, adopted the desperate course of summoning an Assembly of Notables, consisting of nobles, bishops, and magistrates—classes hitherto exempt from taxation—who would, he trusted, with the audacious hopefulness characteristic of his nature, vote for the abolition of their own privileges, and thus at least stave off the day of reckoning.

The Assemblage of Notables was opened by the King on February 22, 1787, and on the next day it was divided into seven bureaux, each presided over by a Prince of the Blood. Monsieur was at the head of the First Bureau, thus finding himself in a position of political authority. He was determined to be conciliatory and agreeable, as is proved by his opening words: "Called by the will of the King to preside over you, this favour, precious as it is, would nevertheless be incomplete if it did not please you. I wish it had been possible for me to ask for your consent, but as it is not, I shall try to deserve it by the impartial manner in which I lead the deliberations."

It was soon apparent that the Assembly of Notables

would not be a success from the Government point of view. In vain did the King send to the bureaux—as on a somewhat analogous occasion the celebrated Mrs. Bond sent to the ducklings—forbidding them to discuss the desirability of the proposed taxes, and ordering that they should confine their deliberations to the methods by which they were to be levied. The Notables did not see the matter at all in the same light as did the Government, and rebelled, attacking Calonne violently, and insisting that he must give them an exact and minute account of the state of the Exchequer, before they would go a step further. The lower classes, in their ignorance and hatred of the Government, sided with the Notables in the struggle against taxation, and appeared to approve of a policy which left the poor to bear the whole burden of providing the necessary money for the State.

Monsieur, in contradistinction to the Comte d'Artois, sided with his bureau in everything, and insisted that its *procès-verbal* should bear the words, "In the presence and approved of by Monsieur." He took the popular side with emphasis, and considered that, in the case of the establishment of the proposed Provincial Assemblies, the Tiers État should be as many in number as the clergy and nobles united. His bureau was known by the flattering name of "the Wise Man's Bureau," and he gained a great reputation by his constant attendance to business and his care for the interests and cause of the people. The King became rather jealous of him, and popular feeling is shown by the fact that a caricature was in circulation called "La France Malade," which represented France as dying, eight saucers of blood having just been drawn from her by M. de Calonne, the Queen waiting with a ninth saucer, and

Monsieur, as the benevolent doctor, pushing her aside while he applies a bandage to the wound.

The brilliant, mendacious Calonne was indeed in evil case. Falsification of the accounts, specious arguments to deceive the simple-minded King, lighthearted lies which served for a time to keep up appearances, were all of no avail. Monsieur, backed up by his bureau, refused to be satisfied with the skilful speech—glossing over the financial tragedy in progress—which Calonne had made at the opening of the Assembly of Notables, and insisted that an exact financial statement must be laid before the Notables. The unfortunate Calonne exclaimed that publicity meant ruin, and it was at last decided that he should submit the accounts to a secret Committee, assembled at the Luxembourg under Monsieur's presidency. It was afterwards discovered that even on this occasion Calonne had behaved with duplicity, and had left some of the accounts behind; but though a full disclosure was not forthcoming, it was evident that the position, with a deficit of apparently 120,000,000 livres, was almost desperate. The scene must have been curious; for the Committee meeting lasted for five hours, and during all that time, surrounded by a throng of excited enemies, Calonne defended himself with perfect coolness, and with a courage worthy of a better cause.

Eventually the King ordered that there should be a general meeting of all the Notables to hear Calonne's defence of himself, but that no discussion should be allowed, and that directly after the speech of the Controller, the Notables should again divide into bureaux. Calonne excited general indignation by pretending in his speech that he and the Notables were completely in accord as to principles, and only differed as to form.

"It is indecent and dishonest to deceive the King and the Assemblage thus!"¹ cried Monsieur wrathfully; and it was decided that Calonne's address should be printed and sent to each of the bureaux, that they might compare it with what had really taken place.

The fall of the Controller-General was inevitable; and when it was discovered that he had speculated on the Bourse on his own account without informing the King, it was considered necessary to exile him.

Theodore de Lameth, in his fragmentary Memoirs, gives a curious account of an interview with Madame de Balbi while the Notables were sitting. He says:

"I had hardly entered when Madame de Balbi asked me, 'Well, M. de Lameth, what do you think of what is going on?'

"Do you wish, Madame, to speak of the Notables, who are without respect for the King or pity for the people?'

"But what do you expect? You know how they speak of the King. When they want change in a public house, they throw a crown on the table and say, 'Change me this drunkard.'"

Madame de Balbi went on to argue, with her usual impetuosity, that the King was incapable of reigning and would lose his crown, and asked Lameth who would then be chosen as Regent. After much pressure had been exercised to make him give his opinion, he at last said that he considered that the Queen, as mother to the future King, would be the most suitable person to hold the Regency. This answer did not evidently please the lady, and she showed her disapproval very plainly; while the Comte de la Châtre, who had up to this point been silent, rose and said with decision:

¹ Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, vol. ii. p. 122.

“Certainly, if that happens, I shall undertake to take the Austrian woman back to her own country with fifty dragoons of my regiment.”

“And I, La Châtre, know a man who might stop you with a regiment of fifty soldiers,” answered Lameth hotly.

Such talk was little short of treasonable; but in spite of Madame de Balbi’s power over Monsieur, and her intimacy with him, we must, I think, hesitate before we credit him with similar views to those held by his followers. As we shall see later, it was his fate to be continually surrounded by ardent partisans over whom he exercised little influence, and whose zeal often outstripped their discretion; his fate, too, to be always credited with a participation in their excesses, whereas those who came personally into contact with him found, instead of the fanatic they had expected, a sensible, moderate man, very superior in mind and morals to his excitable and short-sighted adherents.

The poor King was in a miserable state of uncertainty about the choice of a new Controller-General, for he detested Necker, for whom the country was clamouring. “It will be necessary for my brother to have no dinner for two days to make him decide,”¹ said Monsieur disrespectfully. In the end the Queen’s protégé, Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, was chosen in the place of Calonne, whom he had denounced with the utmost energy, but in whose footsteps he was obliged to follow as far as any plan for reforming the finances was concerned; and on May 25, 1787, the sitting of the Notables came to an end. They had done nothing as far as legislation was concerned, except to clamour for the States-General, and

¹ Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, vol. ii. p. 134.

to show defiance of the Royal authority ; but Monsieur must have contemplated the nine weeks of their assembly with complacency. He had taken his own line, had come forward to the front rank, and was now the most popular member of the Royal Family in France, if we except the revolutionary Duke of Orléans.

Meanwhile, no money being forthcoming, the proposed taxes were sent for registration to the "Parlement" of Paris, who promptly followed the example of the Notables, refused to register, and demanded the States-General as the only body who could decide on fresh taxation. As a consequence, the Parlement was exiled to Troyes, and Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois were sent, one to the Cour des Comptes and the other to the Cour des Aides, to demand the registration of the Stamp Act, which was the special tax introduced by the new Controller. Monsieur went reluctantly ; but his journey there was a triumph, as crowds surrounded his carriage, and the fishwomen threw their arms round his neck and insisted on kissing him. In the Hôtel-de-Ville his position was not so pleasant, for the Cour des Comptes, like the Notables, protested against a forced registration, and showed indifference when threatened with exile. However, as Monsieur was considered the people's champion, he was credited with acting unwillingly as an instrument of despotic power. Therefore his intervention did not interfere with his popularity, and he was accompanied back to the Luxembourg by an enthusiastic and admiring crowd, while the Comte d'Artois was greeted with murmurs, and had to be protected by an armed force.

The unfortunate King now tried the effect of an exercise of despotic power. He held a Royal Session,

and ordered the new laws for taxation to be passed, while, to punish the Parlements, he established Grand Baillages for the trying of cases hitherto brought before them, and a Plenary Court consisting of the Princes and nobility, to register the taxes. At these measures, which were not long in force, there arose a storm throughout the country which could only be assuaged by the recall of Necker, and by the promise of a speedy assemblage of the States-General. Meanwhile, Monsieur was basking in the light of public approval. He went to the Opera, and was received with tremendous enthusiasm ;¹ and he was credited with having thrown himself at the feet of the King, imploring him not to overthrow the constitutional laws of the country. On Necker's recall he was anxious to prove that he was no longer hostile to the popular favourite, and, meeting him at Versailles, he made the following little speech :

“The wish of the nation recalls you here. I see you with the greatest pleasure. In 1781, without ceasing to esteem you, I had some prejudices against you ; but when a man has passed the age of thirty his thoughts and judgments are very different from what they were at twenty-five.”

So Monsieur made his political recantation, and played with the Revolution, thinking it a fire which would die out if watered by a few soothing words and a little judicious diplomacy. He was before long to put his hand so far into the flame that he would scorch himself, and, drawing back in sudden alarm, would retire to the cold regions of philosophical reasoning and worship of the divine rights of kings.

After much disturbance throughout the country,

¹ Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, vol. ii. p. 266.

risings in Paris, and violent pamphlets, the elections for the States-General were at last accomplished, and on Monday, May 4, 1789, the King—hopeful that his troubles were at last ended—opened the Salle des Menus at Versailles to the great assemblage. Both his brothers were of course present; but from this time there is no mention of Monsieur being permitted to take any prominent part in a political movement. The King, as we know, had been jealous of the popularity he had earned at the time of the sitting of the Notables, and the Queen and her party hated and mistrusted him. Therefore he was relegated as far as possible to the background, and was kept in ignorance of the opinions and plans of the Court. He was too timid and also too scrupulous to lead a party, or to devise a policy of his own; but for a short time he was, with many waverings, to be an instrument in the hands of the strongest man in France.

CHAPTER IV

Mirabeau—Monsieur's relations with him—The Memoir—Monsieur on the King—The Marquis de Favras—The attack on Versailles, Favras' doings—L'Affaire Favras—Mirabeau's agitation—Monsieur at the Hôtel-de-Ville—His defence of himself—Favras' execution—Question of Monsieur's complicity and moral responsibility.

TARNISHED in reputation, persecuted by his own kin, Gabriel Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau had come to Paris to expiate by the work he tried to do for France in the three years left to him, a life of dissipations and rebellions, irradiated in spite of its blackness by the fire of genius. After much opposition he had managed to be elected one of the deputies for the Tiers État, and from the first he realised the significance of the great movement before him, and determined if possible to save the Monarchy, or at least the lives of Louis XVI and of Marie Antoinette. He first tried to approach the Queen through his friend the Comte de la Marck, but she refused to listen to his advances.

The dissipated and disreputable Duc d'Orléans seemed inclined to make advances to the great tribune, and asked to meet him at dinner. Mirabeau was flattered by this attention; but his quick intuition soon discovered the despicable character of the man before him, who inspired him, he said, with "neither liking nor confidence."¹ On one occasion he exclaimed with

¹ *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i. p. 88.



From an engraving by Peronard.

THE COMTE DE MIRABEAU.

passionate indignation, "They declare that I belong to his party; I would not have him for a valet!"¹

Events marched quickly; July 14th saw the destruction of the Bastille, by the end of August the National Assembly had progressed as far in the making of the Constitution as to be debating on the question whether or no the King should have the power of veto over the laws enacted by the Assembly, and on October 5th the state of public feeling was shown by the Insurrection of Women, and Versailles was besieged by an excited throng who, clamouring for bread, penetrated even into the Royal apartments, and next day brought back the King, Queen, and Dauphin in triumph to the Tuileries.

There was no time to be lost. "What are those people thinking about?" exclaimed Mirabeau in despair to La Marck. "Do they not see the abyss which is opening beneath their feet?" Once, impelled to a state of exasperation more violent than usual, he cried, "All is lost; the King and Queen will perish, and you will see it; the people will trample on their corpses; you do not realise the dangers of their position, but it is necessary to make them understand them."²

How? There was indeed the principal difficulty, a difficulty which, alas! was never overcome till it was too late for action. Mirabeau determined to make at any rate an attempt to point out to the King and Queen the course they should pursue, to extricate themselves from the perils surrounding them. He embodied his views in a Memoir, which he brought to his friend the Comte de la Marck, and begged

¹ *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i. p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 112.

him to convey it to the Royal Family. This Memoir advised the King to leave Paris, and to retire, not to the frontiers, which would excite alarm, but to Normandy or Anjou, to summon the National Assembly to follow him, and to issue reassuring proclamations. Louis XVI was also counselled to renew the constitutional basis of the Government lately decreed, to maintain the abolition of the Parlements, and to show that he was the father of his people, and therefore the enemy of despotism, abuses, and extravagance by announcing that luxury should be banished from the Royal Establishment, and that the State money should go exclusively to ameliorating the lot of the people.

The Comte de la Marck was on intimate terms with Marie Antoinette ; but it would have been impossible to show the Memoir to her, as Mirabeau had just attacked her most violently at the Assembly, for having appeared at the dinner given by the Royal Gardes du Corps to the Régiment de Flandre, which had to the people's indignation been summoned to Versailles ; and she had furthermore been persuaded by those who surrounded her, that Mirabeau was the instigator of the attack on Versailles on October 5th. Who could be trusted to give the Memoir a serious and impartial reading ? The Comte de la Marck thought of Monsieur. "Without," he says, "having ever had intimate relations with Monsieur, Comte de Provence, I knew that he was a sensible, well-informed, and thoughtful man ; and I believed that it would be possible to confide an affair of this kind to him. I spoke to M. de la Châtre, his first gentleman of the chamber, and begged him to ask the Prince for an interview, which must be strictly secret, for Monsieur

was as carefully watched at the Luxembourg as the King at the Tuileries. It was granted to me, and M. de la Châtre took me to the Prince between midnight and one o'clock in the morning."¹

The Comte de la Marck opened the interview with the most careful diplomacy. He represented the fact that Mirabeau was a most dangerous enemy, and that it would be wise for the Government to enlist him on their side, said it was untrue that he had ever belonged to the party of the Duc d'Orléans, had instigated the attack on the Tuileries, or prompted the violence with which the King and Queen had been forced into Paris; and told Monsieur that, on the other hand, Mirabeau considered it very important that the King and Queen should leave this dangerous city, and was most anxious to be employed as an instrument to save the Monarchy.

"Monsieur," says the Comte de la Marck,² "listened to me attentively; he approved of what I had done; he then took the manuscript which I had in my hand, and read it before me, making comments from time to time, either on passages which lacked clearness, or on the measures proposed, which appeared to him difficult of execution. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to tell me that he approved in general of the plan proposed, but that he was convinced beforehand that the King would not consent to adopt it.

"I proposed then to Monsieur to obtain the help of the Queen, who, once persuaded, would perhaps obtain the concurrence of the King. 'You are mistaken,' he said, 'if you think it in the Queen's power to decide the King in so grave a matter.' I replied

¹ *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i. p. 123.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 124.

that it must be allowed that everything was lost if neither the resolution of the King nor the influence of the Queen could be counted on. 'To show you,' Monsieur went on, 'what is sometimes the King's humour when the Queen intervenes in an affair, I will tell you what happened one day when the Archbishop of Toulouse [M. de Brienne] was still First Minister. He wished to remove the Baron de Breteuil from the Ministry, as he hampered him ; he spoke about this several times to the King, but always without success. The more the Archbishop saw the King's resistance, the more he thought it important to remove M. de Breteuil ; so he returned continually to the charge. At last, tired of the struggle, the King said to him, "You wish for it ; well ! I consent ; you have only to ask him to send in his resignation." Then, several moments afterwards, he added with a sort of contentment, "After all, he is a man belonging completely to the Queen's party." 'The weakness and indecision of the King,' continued Monsieur, 'are almost beyond belief. To give you an idea of his character, imagine oiled billiard balls which you try in vain to keep in one position.'

"After a conversation of over two hours with Monsieur, for whom personally I have nothing but praise, I retired, full of sadness. I was certain that it would be impossible to persuade the King to adopt the energetic measures which alone could save him, and that resolution and decision were lacking where it was absolutely essential to find them."

However, in spite of the apparent hopelessness of the attempt, Monsieur exerted his influence to bring the King and Mirabeau together, and to use Mirabeau's talents for the defence of the Monarchy. As

a result of his efforts, a treaty was drawn up, by which Mirabeau promised to support the Monarchy instead of attacking it. In return for his promised help a subsidy of 6,000 francs was to be granted him, and he was ultimately to become Ambassador at Constantinople. This treaty, written by Monsieur in a small, close handwriting, signed and approved by Louis XVI, and also signed by Mirabeau, was found in the Archives of the State Council after the Restoration, and was handed over to Louis XVIII, who received it with a smile, "as though it afforded him satisfaction to look back at a crisis now long happily surmounted."¹

Mirabeau's policy was, however, completely nullified by the King's ceaseless vacillations and occasionally misplaced obstinacy, while, though the matter is mysterious, a tacit understanding between Monsieur and Mirabeau doubtless existed behind this treaty, by which in certain given circumstances — such, possibly, as some striking proof of the King's incapacity — Monsieur was to be brought forward as President of the Council, possibly as Regent. Certainly Monsieur was particularly anxious to attach Mirabeau to himself; and through the Duc de Lévis, with whom he had been intimate since his childhood, and whom he trusted implicitly, he offered him a pension of 20,000 francs a month till his debts were paid. Mirabeau accepted the money; and instead of using it to pay his debts expended it in hospitality, so that his house might be the rallying point for men who would be useful to his purpose.

Many were the "friendly chats," as he termed them, which he had with Monsieur, and the report was circulated that there were secret assemblies at

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. ii, p. 218.

the Luxembourg, "of which l'Abbé Maury and other deputies of that stamp were the soul and the orators."¹ General opinion wavered about Monsieur. He had lost a part of his short-lived popularity, and it was supposed that his partisanship of the Tiers État had been violently shaken. Mirabeau, however, knew the truth about him, and, while deploring what he considered his want of courage, realised the difficulties of his position. "At the Luxembourg they chafe and kill themselves with wishing to come forward."² "At the Luxembourg they are afraid of being afraid."³ "The Queen treats Monsieur like a little chicken which one likes to caress through the bars of a coop but one is very anxious not to let out, and he allows himself to be treated in this way."⁴ Thus does Mirabeau graphically describe Monsieur's situation.

Another person, indignant at the disgraceful failure of authority shown on October 5th, and horrified at the perils incurred by the Royal Family, was trying to work in the same direction as did Mirabeau. Thomas de Mahy, Marquis de Favras, First Lieutenant of Monsieur's Swiss Guard, and member of his suite, was an ardent Royalist. Born at Blois on March 26, 1745, he was of noble birth but of small fortune. He had married a daughter of the Prince of Anhalt, who only brought him a yearly pension of 1,000 florins, which was extorted by legal compulsion from her father. Favras was a man of unblemished courage, and of great ambition. His military career had been varied, as he was a *Mousquetaire* at the age of eleven, had fought in the Seven Years' War, and had been employed in 1787

¹ Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, vol. ii. p. 408.

² *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i. p. 434.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 442.



T. MAHY DE FAVRAS.

*De dessin par le peintre David, au moment
où on le conduisait au supplice.*

- 19 février 1790

From a drawing by David.

THE MARQUIS DE FAVRAS.

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to raise a patriotic legion to help the Dutch against Prussia, an expedition which was to bear unfortunate fruit as far as he was concerned, for it was while engaged on this business that he first met the recruiting officer Turcaty, who was afterwards to ruin him. In 1789, he turned his hand to writing, and published two highly utopian pamphlets on the burning question of finance.

Favras was in Paris on October 5th, 1789, when Versailles was attacked, and followed while the disreputable rain-soaked column, led by Maillard brandishing a bare sword, and gesturing to encourage the crowd behind him, started on its disorderly way along the long avenue leading towards Versailles. The King was hunting, but Monsieur and Madame Elizabeth had driven out from Paris to inform the Queen of the impending incursion,¹ and according to Rivarol,² Monsieur was the one person who was absolutely composed and gave good advice, which was unfortunately disregarded.

Favras galloped to Versailles, where he found everything in confusion, no one seeming able to decide on anything. He was furious at the universal inaction and indecision. "It is shameful,"³ he cried, "to allow a horde like this to advance without resistance to the King's Palace,"⁴ and he implored the courtiers to come out with sword in hand, to raise a few faithful soldiers, and to beat back the mob. The courtiers objected that the crowd was very numerous, and that horses would be

¹ *Journal de Marie Thérèse de France, Duchesse d'Angoulême, annoté par Louis XVIII.*

² Rivarol, *Mémoires*, Note to p. 310.

³ Marquis de Favras Alexis de Valon, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1851.

Rivarol, *Mémoires*, Note to p. 310.

necessary to disperse it. "Well then, I will get horses," cried the Marquis, nothing daunted, and he asked for admission to the Comte de Saint-Priest. There he was kept waiting for some time in the anteroom. When at last admitted, "Sir," he cried, "I beg you in my own name, as well as in that of two hundred gentlemen assembled at this moment in l'Œil-de-Bœuf, to allow me the disposal of the King's horses for an hour. We will then set to work, if you will allow it, to disperse the horde which is approaching, and to take away its cannon." The Minister replied coldly that he could not dispose of the horses in the Royal stables without permission. However, he consented to tell the King of Favras' proposal; but an hour later he returned to say that it was necessary to wait for the present, as Lafayette and several battalions of the National Guard were accompanying the insurgents. "Wait!" cried Favras in an agony; "but it is disgraceful; the Palace will be invaded in two hours by these brigands!" Saint-Priest answered nothing.

"In short, you will do nothing?" cried Favras.

"No, sir," answered the Minister. "¹

It must be allowed in justice to Saint-Priest, whom we shall meet again, that the inaction was not of his making. He had proposed to despatch battalions to guard the bridges of Sèvres and of Saint-Cloud, and to send the Queen and children to Rambouillet, while the King was to advance at the head of his Guards, meet the unruly throng, and order the Garde Nationale to return to Paris. Marie Antoinette had prevented this plan, as she had refused to be separated from the King.²

¹ Marquis de Favras Alexis de Valon, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1851.

² *Notice on Saint-Priest*, by M. de Barante, p. cxvii.

Therefore Favras raged in inaction, while the Palace was besieged, the Bodyguard killed, and the Royal Family insulted. Next day his feelings were heated to fever-point, as he formed one of the faithful bodyguard surrounding the King, Queen, Monsieur, Madame Elizabeth, and the two children, as they were conducted captive to Paris, surrounded by exultant crowds. He noticed a young officer of the National Guard who wept as he accompanied the Royal prisoners on their melancholy journey, and it occurred to him that it might be possible to raise a faithful guard, and to convey the King and Queen in safety out of the seditious capital. Loyal, ambitious, and courageous, the idea began at once to work in his excitable brain, and he looked about for means wherewith to carry it into execution. There is little doubt that he applied directly or indirectly to his master the Comte de Provence for assistance, and though Monsieur may have preferred to know nothing definite about the affairs in which the First Lieutenant of his Bodyguard busied himself, Favras was at any rate empowered to raise in his name a loan of two millions of livres from the bankers Schaumel and Sartorius. The next important matter was to find recruits for the bodyguard. While Favras was debating on this point, he received an evening visit from Turcaty, accompanied by a friend, M. Morel. They had just come from a performance at the theatre of Chenier’s *Charles IX*, appeared extremely indignant at the revolutionary sentiments expressed in the play, and proposed to Favras that he should pay an organised claue and hiss it off the stage. Here, thought the unfortunate Marquis, were the very men he had been seeking, and, carried away by excitement, “Eh, gentlemen!” he cried, “we need not talk about tragedies ;

the idea is to assassinate the King ; that is what must be prevented ! ” The two recruiting officers seemed much surprised at these words, and asked Favras to explain himself ; at the same time encouraging him to confide in them. It is possible that they had in the first instance visited Favras as police spies, for Lafayette, the General of the Parisian Army, told the American Minister Morris that he had suspected a plot for some time, and he had evidently charged his aide-de-camp Boinville, whose name appears constantly in the procedure of the Committee of Enquiry about the matter, to keep Favras continually under observation. At any rate, Turcaty and Morel acted from the first as instigators, abettors, and informers. Marquier, the young officer in the National Guard, was approached by Favras, but prudently refused to have anything to do with the matter. Morel, one of the informers, was present at the interview, and saw Favras hand Marquier, with the greatest mystery, a pamphlet called “ *Ouvrez donc les yeux.* ” Page 51 of this pamphlet, which was afterwards produced, and was one of the most serious pieces of evidence against Favras, had been specially marked by him ; and was written to incite the National Guard to rise against the Revolutionary Government, and to return to their duties to the Monarchy.

On the night of December 24th, 1789, Favras and his wife were arrested, and tremendous excitement was caused throughout Paris by a printed pamphlet affixed to the walls and buildings, which ran thus : “ The Marquis of Favras has been arrested with Madame his wife, on the night of the 24th, because of a scheme to raise 30,000 men to assassinate M. de la Fayette and the Mayor, and then to cut off our supplies. Monsieur,

brother of the King, was at the head of it. Paris, the 25th. Signed Barauzz."

Of what took place at the Luxembourg when Monsieur heard of Favras' arrest and of the accusations brought against his own august person, we have various and conflicting accounts. Lafayette, Mirabeau's enemy, who either believed, or pretended to believe, that the plan of the proposed plot included the assassination of himself and Bailly, told Morris, the American Minister, and a Mr. Short, who were dining with him on the night of the 26th, that he had gone to the Luxembourg to tell Monsieur of the arrest, and to return to his keeping one of his own letters which was found on Favras, and which seemed to implicate the Prince in the affair. This letter, Lafayette told Monsieur, was only known to himself and to Bailly, so that the Prince would not be compromised ; at which assurance he showed intense relief.¹

This version sounds unlikely, as Monsieur was always cautious and diplomatic ; and however deeply he may have been engaged in Favras' plot, it is difficult to believe that he would have written a letter incriminating himself, and would have entrusted it to the reckless Marquis.

A second account, given by Lafayette in his Memoirs, and one which bears the stamp of probability, is to the effect that he sent his aide-de-camp Boinville to inform Monsieur of the arrest, that Monsieur replied coolly that for some time he had suspected an intrigue, and named a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine in which he considered it to have been carried on, and that after Boinville had left him, Monsieur consulted his friends, and determined to make a public denial of any partici-

¹ Memorial of Governor Morris, December 27, 1789.

pation in the plot.¹ This is not incompatible with Mirabeau's account of the affair, in which, after mentioning the inflated accounts of Favras' scheme in popular circulation, he continues: "To tell you how we worked, I and the grey man [so Mirabeau had nicknamed the Duc de Lévis, Monsieur's trusted friend and confidant] under my direction, would be useless. You will guess it all from the result. Monsieur sent for M. de la Fayette and said to him before witnesses: 'Monsieur de la Fayette, this pamphlet is in circulation in Paris. You have a great reputation in Paris, Monsieur de la Fayette; I have no doubt that you will be active in destroying a calumny by which the malicious say that you profit. I shall speak about it this evening to the Commune of Paris. I hope that you will be present.'"²

Mirabeau was much agitated; for, in view of his plan of bringing Monsieur forward as President of the Council, First Minister, and intermediary between the Court and the Revolutionary party, nothing could have been more untoward than this catastrophe. The imminence of the danger had, however, electrified the Prince into an energy and promptitude hitherto unknown to him; and he wrote to the Mayor Bailly, as follows: "I beg of you, Sir, to ask Messieurs the members of the Commune, for a special meeting this evening, as I wish to communicate to them a matter in which I am interested."

The Mayor and the Commune were much flattered at the unwonted respect shown them by the First Prince of the Blood, and Monsieur's entrance at six

¹ Lafayette, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 392.

² *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*. Letter, December 26, 1789.

o'clock in the evening into the crowded Hôtel-de-Ville was the signal for loud applause.¹ A deputation of twelve members received him at the door, and led him to an armchair.

"Sirs," he said, "I come among you to spurn an audacious calumny. M. de Favras was arrested the day before yesterday by your Committee of Enquiry, and to-day it is insistently spread abroad that I am closely allied with him. In my position as citizen of the town of Paris, I think it my duty to inform you myself of the only ways in which I know M. de Favras.

"In 1772, he became a member of my Swiss Guard. He left it in 1775, and I have not spoken to him since that time.

"Deprived for several months of my income, anxious about several large sums I have to pay in January, I wished to be able to fulfil my engagements without being an expense to the State Exchequer. It was therefore represented to me that I should do well to raise a loan. M. de la Châtre, about a fortnight ago, mentioned M. de Favras to me as being able to do this by means of two bankers, Messieurs Schaumel and Sartorius. In consequence, I signed a bond for two millions, the necessary sum to meet my engagements for the beginning of the year and to pay the expenses of my household. The affair was solely monetary. I ordered my treasurer to see to it. I have not seen M. de Favras, I have not written to him, and I have had no communication with him; what he has done elsewhere is perfectly unknown to me."

Monsieur then quoted the pamphlet distributed

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution, par Deux Amis de la Liberté*, vol. ix. p. 139.

throughout the capital, accusing him of being the instigator of the plot, and went on : " Without doubt you do not expect me to abase myself by denying so cowardly a crime. But at a time when the most absurd calumnies may easily cause the best citizens to be confounded with the enemies of the Revolution, I think it my duty for the King's, as well as for your and my own sake, to enter into the details which you have just learnt, that public opinion may not remain for a moment in doubt about the matter.

" As to my personal opinions, I can speak of them with confidence to my fellow citizens. Since the day when, in the second Assembly of Notables, I declared myself on the fundamental question about which opinion was at that time divided, I have never ceased to believe that a great revolution was in progress, and that the King, by his views, his virtues, and his supreme rank, ought to be the leader of it, as it would not be advantageous to the nation without being equally so to the Monarch ; to sum up, that Royal authority was the rampart of national liberty, and national liberty the base of Royal authority.

" Let any one quote one of my actions, one of my speeches which has denied these principles, or shown that in whatever circumstances I find myself placed, the happiness of the King, and that of the people, have ceased to be the supreme object of my thoughts and wishes. As to that, I have the right to be believed on my word. I have never altered my opinions or principles, I shall never alter them."

Bailly having made a flattering answer, Monsieur finished with the words : " The duty which I have accomplished has been painful to a virtuous heart, but I am rewarded by the feelings which the Assembly has

just shown me, and my only words now shall be to ask pardon for those who have done me wrong." He went out with his hands raised as though in supplication. Next day his address was despatched to the *Assemblée Constituante*.

The Queen objected strongly to Monsieur's procedure in this matter,¹ as she disliked any action on his part which brought him before the public eye, but her feelings on the subject were lukewarm compared with the indignation of the Comte d'Artois, the Prince de Condé and the other *Émigrés*, who had fled from France after the taking of the Bastille. The Prince de Condé wrote : "I think you will shudder with rage as do the Comte d'Artois and I, when you read what I send you. Is it possible that the blood of the Bourbons can degrade itself to this point, and that it flows in the veins of a man, if he is one, who allows himself a step evidently dictated by fear and by meanness."² There was no thought in the minds of the *Émigrés*, it must be remarked, of the question as to whether or no Monsieur had perjured himself; the point of their indignation lay in the fact that he had lowered himself irreparably, by an action which recognised the new Constitution.

Meanwhile, in Paris there was tremendous excitement about "l'Affaire Favras," and it seemed to be the object of both Royalists and Revolutionaries to hurry the unfortunate man out of the world as quickly as possible. The whole country was in a state of tumultuous agitation, which was caused, the Revolutionaries considered, or pretended to consider, by Royalist conspiracies; and when Favras was accused by the informers, Morel and

¹ Lafayette, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 393.

² Daudet's *Émigration*. *Condé à Larozzière*, January 6, 1790.

Turcaty, of intending to collect an army of 200,000 men, with the object of cutting off the provisions of Paris and of murdering Necker, Bailly, and Lafayette, a howl of indignation arose throughout the country, and every one demanded the life of the traitor. At the same time, it was cleverly insinuated by the Revolutionary demagogues, that the Royalist party were anxious to hurry on the death of Favras, from their fear of incriminating revelations on his part.

Favras was firm to the last. He repulsed with horror the idea of the scheme of wholesale murder and of civil war imputed to him, and refused, in spite of strenuous efforts on the part of the Revolutionaries, to incriminate either the King or Monsieur.

He did indeed write a defensive Memoir, which never appeared, as in a letter written on February 18, when he was imprisoned in the Châtelet, he complains : "The printer is a cruel man . . . he has been bought by some one . . . two full sheets are still unfinished." The same day he was condemned to death, by hanging. He was conducted to the Hôtel-de-Ville on February 19, 1790, where, probably in the hope of a reprieve, he occupied four hours in writing out a lengthy and minute will. Long before he had finished that and a letter to his wife, cries of anger and impatience were heard from the populace outside. Apparently he was tempted to make a full confession from the scaffold, but l'Abbé Le Duc, who accompanied him, exhorted him to silence ; "Your fate is irrevocable," he said ; "submit then to what the King cannot now prevent, and consider that you are saving the whole Royal Family, and that your family will receive the price of your heroic devotion."¹

¹ *Mémoires du Général Baron Thiebault*, vol. i. p. 272.

Insults were hurled at Favras while he was dying, and it was with great difficulty that his corpse was saved from the fury of the people. His death is noteworthy as the first of the legalised assassinations which were to slake the rage of the people at long centuries of oppression, and to disgrace the annals of the great Revolution.

The question, however, which is at present to our purpose is that of Monsieur's complicity in Favras' plot, and, allowing complicity, of his moral responsibility for his death. Lafayette tells us that Talon, the civil lieutenant who received Favras' confession, and who long afterwards, according to common report, handed over to Louis XVIII the papers dealing with the affair, told the prisoner that it would be impossible to save him, and exhorted him to die with his secret untold. Lafayette says further that Favras died "a hero of fidelity and of courage, while Monsieur, his august accomplice, lacked both. The King and Queen had nothing to do with the plot, or at any rate did not know the central plan of it; they had no confidence in their brother; and the Queen with good reason thought him her personal enemy."¹ Lafayette, however, as has already been remarked, was, as the Queen's ardent and chivalrous partisan, hostile to Monsieur, whom he further considered Mirabeau's trump card in the contest against himself; and there is no doubt that to increase his own importance he exaggerated the scope of the conspiracy. This seems never to have involved murder, but only the comparatively innocent intention of raising a faithful bodyguard for the King, which would convey him safely out of the dangerous city of Paris. If Monsieur—or at any rate

¹ Lafayette, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 391.

Mirabeau—were privy to the plot, there was in all probability, as we have already seen, a further development to this scheme—a development which included the transference of the chief power from the incapable hands of Louis XVI to that of the Comte de Provence; but of this part of the enterprise Favras was doubtless as absolutely ignorant as was Louis XVI.

Mirabeau, who possibly on this matter is not likely to be more trustworthy than Lafayette, insists in his letters to La Marck that Monsieur was calumniated; as no doubt he was as to the extent and character of the plan, and the assassinations involved.

“He has the purity of a child,” says Mirabeau, “but he has also the weakness of one, and it is very difficult to make him understand that if he would let things take their course for twenty-four hours only, he would be a second Duc d’Orléans”;¹ by which Mirabeau evidently means a popular leader. Monsieur’s slowness of comprehension on this occasion may be noted to his credit. The only other testimony to his absolute freedom from complicity in “l’Affaire Favras” is that of his faithful and intimate friend the high-minded d’Avaray, who wrote in the year 1799: “I answer for the fact that M. de Favras having been for a short time in the Swiss Bodyguard of Monsieur (now King), gave up his post in 1775, never knew the Prince, and never had the slightest direct communication with him.”²

Possibly d’Avaray, though on the most confidential terms with his master, was not the recipient of all his secrets, for it is difficult to explain satisfactorily why if Monsieur, who was possessed of unbounded credit,

¹ *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i p. 440.

² See Daudet, *l’Emigration*, vol ii p. 230.

really required two millions of livres to carry on his household expenses, he did not proceed to get the money through the ordinary channels of his treasurers and men of business, instead of employing an adventurer like Favras as his agent. There seems little doubt that even if he held no direct communication with Favras, and was careful not to be cognisant of the details of his scheme, he knew him as a brave man and an ardent Royalist, and was quite aware that the two million livres were to be used in the defence of the Monarchy.

So far, I think, we must allow Monsieur's complicity in the plot, and, in view of this, it is impossible to read his eloquent speech at the Hôtel-de-Ville without repugnance. In his defence it must, however, be urged that it was impossible to save Favras, who must, moreover, have known from the first that, while the success of his scheme meant riches and prominence, failure probably entailed the extreme penalty of the law. On the other hand, incrimination of the King's brother, possibly of the King himself, would have involved infinite harm and danger to the whole Royal Family, as Favras' confessor told him on the scaffold.

We are informed, moreover, by Rivarol,¹ that in going to the Hôtel-de-Ville and speaking there as he did, Monsieur was obeying the King's express orders, and that it cost him much to conform to them; while from the tone of Mirabeau's letter on the subject, it may be gathered that he and the Duc de Lévis found great difficulty in persuading the Prince to a course which was highly distasteful to him.

His action, therefore, which deceived no one com-

¹ *Mémoires*, Note to p. 310.

pletely, and called down upon him a storm of reprobation from all parties, can hardly be judged as a stain on his moral character, and must be considered rather as a painful political necessity. It was almost impossible to walk morally unscathed through that terrible revolutionary time, and that Monsieur, under the natural imperturbability and self-control which carried him safely through the ordeal at the Hôtel-de-Ville, suffered intensely from the position in which he found himself, is I think shown by his behaviour after Favras' death. He "retired behind a veil";¹ he would have nothing more to do with politics. Mirabeau was furious. "Monsieur is beneath everything,"² he cried indignantly. "Think that people had gone so far as to give him such sums of money, that if your valet had had the command of them he would have entered the Council, if he had only wished it a little, and that this Monsieur will probably not enter. . . . It is deplorable." In another place Mirabeau says: "Monsieur has surpassed himself in cowardice."³

But Monsieur was not a fool nor a coward, as he often had occasion to prove in the course of an eventful life; and I think that he deserves honour for the scruples which roused Mirabeau's bitter indignation.

¹ Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, vol. ii. p. 469.

² *Correspondance entre Mirabeau et La Marck*, vol. i. p. 460.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 464.

CHAPTER V

Preparations for flight—Deputation to Monsieur—King and Queen's lengthy preparations—Last meeting of the Royal Family—Departure from Paris—Events on the journey—Arrival at Mons—Meeting with Madame de Balbi—Madame's arrival—News of arrest of King and Queen—Monsieur's affection for d'Avaray—He joins the Comte d'Artois.

IT was impossible to compound with the Revolution, or to stay the impetuous torrent of its ever-accelerating progress. The King's aunts went to Italy, Condé and the Comte d'Artois soon followed their example, and the whole Royal Family, who were now under strict observation and virtually in a state of imprisonment, felt that there was no safety possible for them in France. Nevertheless, in spite of the danger, Monsieur, with a constancy which does him honour, refused to escape before the King and the rest of the Royal Family, as he feared that his flight might prevent theirs.

However, in November 1790, the reports of the King and Queen's intended evasion were so persistent that, knowing himself to be excluded from their confidence, Monsieur went to the Tuileries and taxed the Queen with the project. The Queen declared that there was no truth in the rumour at present, but advised her brother-in-law to be in readiness, and promised to warn him in time. Easter was likely to be a dangerous season, as on Easter Day mass would be performed

in the presence of the Royal Family by priests who had taken the oath by which they subscribed to the civil constitution of the clergy, and thus had declared themselves independent of the Pope, and therefore, to all good Catholics, outside the pale of religion. In consequence, as the Comte de Provence expressed the matter, the only choice was "between apostasy and martyrdom; the former revolted me, and I will own that I felt no great vocation for the latter."¹

Therefore, after having discussed the matter with Madame de Balbi, it was decided that Monsieur, Madame, Madame de Balbi, and a fourth person, should escape on Good Friday in Madame de Balbi's carriage. When Monsieur went to the Tuileries to inform the King and Queen of his intention, he found them so deeply engaged in preparations for their own flight that they took no interest in his plans, and merely begged him to draw up a Declaration to the nation for them to leave behind.

There was considerable difficulty in fixing on some one to occupy the fourth place in Monsieur's carriage, and the first person invited by Madame de Balbi refused the dangerous honour. Eventually d'Avaray, in the future to be the King's faithful and devoted friend and Madame de Balbi's bitter enemy, was invited by her to be of the party. D'Avaray acceded to the proposal with enthusiasm, but declared that it was of the utmost importance that Monsieur and Madame should be separated, and should escape by different routes. As Madame was not remarkable for self-control, it was thought wise to keep her in absolute ignorance of the project, and Monsieur discussed the details of her

¹ *Narrative of a Journey to Brussels and Coblenz in 1791.* By Louis XVIII. Doisy Manuscrit inédit.

flight with her reader, Madame Gourbillon, who was to arrange everything for her.

The whole matter was dangerous and difficult of accomplishment, for the King and Queen's preparations were not managed very cleverly, and rumours as to their intentions soon became bruited about.

The gaolers redoubled their precautions, and Monsieur complains that Lafayette's aide-de-camp patrolled the courtyard of the Luxembourg continually. At length reports of the proposed evasion of the Royal Family, and especially of Monsieur, in whom pathetically enough the people still felt confidence, became so persistent that on February 22nd, 1791, an anxious crowd surrounded the Luxembourg, and Monsieur was obliged to appear on the balcony and to declare on his word of honour that he had never intended to leave the country. A deputation of thirty ladies was then despatched to speak to him. He was in Madame's apartments, but went downstairs to hear them. The spokeswoman said to him, "Monsieur, they tell us you are preparing to go; we beg you to remain, and not to leave us."¹ Monsieur answered, "Mesdames, my intention has always been to stay; you know how deeply the King is attached to the Constitution. I am attached to the King and to the Constitution. I would rather lose my life than leave the King." Monsieur was obliged after this to submit to the embarrassing ceremony of receiving embraces from the ladies, and was afterwards conducted to the Tuileries in triumph, his carriage being surrounded by enthusiastic crowds. The Mayor had by this time been summoned from the Council of the Municipality, and harangued the people, exhorting

¹ Bibliothèque de la Révolution, Municipalité de Paris : *Conseil Général de la Commune*.

them to disperse, which they did with no further disturbance.

Monsieur's footnotes to Madame d'Angoulême's account of this incident, written long afterwards, are amusing. She remarks that the Comte de Provence spoke to the people from the balcony; he adds, "with assurance and positively,"¹ and to her bald chronicle of the fact that her aunt and uncle arrived safely at the Tuileries—a way of treating the incident which doubtless seemed to Monsieur to minimise the danger of the adventure—he adds that they accomplished the journey, "not without difficulty, surrounded by an immense crowd carrying torches." Monsieur was evidently well satisfied with his behaviour on this occasion, as he relates that some one told the Queen that under the circumstances Monsieur would certainly give up his visit to the Tuileries, and that the Queen drew herself up proudly and said, "You will see; he will come, and will make the journey back also."

However, it was high time to depart, and Monsieur's preparations, superintended by the active Madame de Balbi, were carried on with much energy. On June 2nd, however, the arrangements for Monsieur's flight were entrusted to d'Avaray, as Madame de Balbi left Paris for Brussels, being entrusted among other important matters with a letter from Marie Antoinette to the Belgian Minister there, a fact which absolved the Queen from the necessity of having to use a cypher,² which was a necessary precaution if the letter went by post.

Monsieur was now longing to be gone; but it was

¹ *Journal de Marie Thérèse de France, annoté par Louis XVIII.*

² Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II et Léopold II.* Letter, June 1, 1791.

necessary to wait while the lengthy preparations for the flight of the King and Queen were in progress. Coming out of Mass, however, on Pentecost Monday, the Queen said confidentially to her brother-in-law : "The King has given orders for us all to walk in the procession of Fête-Dieu at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Look as though you were very much annoyed at this."¹

Nothing more was said till Thursday, when the Queen told Monsieur that their escape was settled for the following Monday. There was no time to lose, as, when once the King's absence was discovered, it would be fatal to be left a hostage in the hands of the infuriated people ; and Monsieur summoned d'Avaray at six o'clock on Friday morning. "Must we be ready to start?" asked the latter as he entered. "Yes," answered Monsieur ; "on Monday."

There was much to be considered, the first and most difficult point being that of egress from the Luxembourg, and about this d'Avaray was much puzzled and agitated. Monsieur was able, however, to tell him of a private room leading out of the Royal bedchamber, and communicating with the great Luxembourg Palace, where none of the National Guard were posted. By this little-known way Monsieur often went privately to hear Mass ; but his gaolers had never suspected its existence. It was further settled that as owing to Monsieur's peculiar walk, it would not be safe to allow him to go even a few steps on foot outside the Luxembourg, a hired carriage must be waiting for him in the Palace court. The next difficulty was to obtain a passport, and d'Avaray determined

¹ This and the rest of the account of Monsieur's flight are taken from *Relation d'un Voyage à Bruxelles et à Coblenz*, which is written by himself

to try to get one through Lord Robert Fitzgerald. This attempt failed, as Lord Robert said he could only provide passports for Englishmen, so d'Avaray was obliged to resort to the task of altering an old passport which the ever-thoughtful Madame de Balbi had left behind, and which was made out for Monsieur and Mademoiselle Foster, and dated the "23 avril." After much careful scratching, which was a difficult process, as the paper was thin, the "23 avril" was altered to the "13 juin," and the passport was made out to Monsieur and Mademoiselle Foster. Blots were then sprinkled copiously over the back of the document to hide the marks where the paper had been submitted to the manipulation of the penknife ; but it was decided that, even with these precautions, it would hardly be safe for the doctored manuscript to be inspected by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Monsieur and d'Avaray therefore resolved to pretend that, being Englishmen, they were not well acquainted with the necessary formalities, and to trust that the authorities would be satisfied with this excuse, and would make no further enquiries.

The next question was that of the route, and it was settled that as the northerly road by Douai and Orchies was the safer, it had better be left to Madame, and that Monsieur should take an easterly direction, and should travel by Soissons, Laon, and Maubeuge, to Mons. Monsieur was to be accompanied by his valet, and d'Avaray by his English servant Sayer, who was not, however, to be told the secret of the identity of his master's travelling companion.

The few days before the start were full of anxiety. Rumours were in the air of the proposed escape of the Royal Family, wild stories were afloat,



From an engraving by W. Greatbatch.

MADAME ELIZABETH.

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telling of plots, evasions, foreign interference ; good patriots were excited and alarmed ; and the only possible defence was an unmoved countenance and a plentiful supply of falsehoods. What else could be done ? Life itself was at stake.

In the midst of the passions raging everywhere, it is pleasant to read of Madame Elizabeth's demeanour when Monsieur went on the last evening he would spend in France for many years, to see her at the Tuileries, and to tell her of his projected departure. "I found her quiet, resigned to God's will, contented, but without manifestations of joy—as calm, in a word, as though she had known of the scheme for a year." She kissed her brother tenderly, and said, "You are religious ; let me give you a relic, it cannot fail to bring you happiness." She then discussed the situation with the utmost calmness, and with a reasonableness which excited Monsieur's intense admiration. His last recollection of that saintly sister was to be a pleasing one.

The Queen, to whom he paid his next visit, was terribly agitated ; and when he went to kiss her, cried : "Be careful not to make me break down ; people must not see that I have been crying !"

The King, Queen, Monsieur, Madame Elizabeth, and Madame d'Angoulême had supper together, and Monsieur at any rate was cheerful, as, with his usual optimism, and with the curious want of realisation of the gravity of the situation which he shows in his account of the affair, he was sure that the whole party would meet again in a few days in some place of safety. The situation was more tragic for the unfortunate King and Queen, who, besides being haunted with apprehensions as to safety, were agitated with a

thousand doubts and fears about the wisdom of the step they were taking, by which it was possible that they might dethrone themselves and deprive their son of the crown. Madame Elizabeth's gentle faith and confidence must have been of great comfort at this terrifying juncture, when the fate of each member of the family trembled in the balance, depending on what the fortune of the next few hours would bring forth.

Monsieur left the Tuileries before eleven, hoping in this way to escape the Duc de Lévis, who generally accompanied him back to the Luxembourg in the evening. Unfortunately, the Duke was already waiting; and Monsieur, who usually talked with him for some time before he went to bed, could only ensure his departure by saying that he had slept very badly the night before, and beginning to undress. Monsieur once in bed and his curtains drawn, the first valet went out to undress himself, before occupying a bed in his master's room. His nightly toilette was not a long business, so as soon as the door had closed behind him, Monsieur jumped out of his fourpost bed, drew the curtains carefully round it again, lit a candle, and went into the sitting-room which led to the little room communicating with the Grand Luxembourg. There the faithful d'Avaray awaited him, after having been terribly alarmed by his failure to turn the key in the lock, and much relieved when he found that the difficulty was caused by the fact that in his agitation he was trying to force it in the wrong direction. On a chair were the black curled wig, the large round hat decorated with an enormous tricolour cockade, the blue coat buttoned up the middle and adorned with red lapels and gold buttons, the large white tie and the brown gloves, which were to give Monsieur the appearance of an

English gentleman. In his pocket was a burnt cork with which to darken his eyebrows. But where were his stick, and the second snuff-box he had intended to take with him? He had left them in his bedroom; and it was difficult for d'Avaray to persuade him not to return for them.

Meanwhile, Madame, who was certainly treated with scant ceremony, had been disturbed in bed by Madame Gourbillon's announcement that the King and her husband had given orders that she was to leave France at once! Apparently she was docile; and when d'Avaray, on the way down, went to see if she was still in her apartments, she had gone, and the hired carriage for her use was standing in the court of the Luxembourg opposite to that destined for her husband.

The Prince was like a schoolboy on a holiday; and he and d'Avaray, in their joy of getting out of the Palace without interference, sang in duet the chorus of a popular topical song: "Ça va bien, ça prend bien, ils ne se doutent de rien." Near the Pont-Neuf they found their travelling carriage waiting for them; and drawing up in a small street, left the hired conveyance and walked to it, even for this short distance d'Avaray considering it necessary to beg the Prince not to waddle, as he feared that his peculiar walk would betray him. The Prince, d'Avaray, and Sayer got inside the carriage, Peronnet mounted one of the horses, d'Avaray, assuming an English accent, told the coachman to drive to Bourget, and the journey began in real earnest. At the Pont-Neuf they were passed by a post-carriage, which to d'Avaray's dismay repassed them at the Porte Saint-Martin, and thinking that this must be another member of the Royal Family who was going by the same route, and would therefore dispute

the horses at the stopping-places and arouse suspicion, he inveighed to himself fiercely about the folly of Princes, who spoil the best-laid plans in the world by refusing to confide in each other. Monsieur divined his anguish ; but in the presence of Sayer could not relieve his mind by telling him that the other carriage would branch off at Bourget, and that it contained Madame and Madame Gourbillon.

Everything on the journey was new and delightful to Monsieur ; and he describes the smallest incidents, such as chance conversations with wayfarers and inn-keepers, with a minuteness which is astonishing, till we remember that the narrator is an eighteenth-century Prince, who had never before come in contact with the world on equal terms. The question of food is of great importance to him, and we are reminded of the fact that all the Royal Family except Monsieur used to come and dine with their aunts without notice, but that the Princesses asked in his case to be told beforehand, as he was so particular about his dinner that it was necessary to prepare special dishes for him. A note of true feeling such as, curiously enough, is not roused by anxiety as to his own or his family's safety, sounds in Monsieur's remark at Marche when he thinks he has arrived at an hotel where he has heard the food is excellent, and finds instead that he is at an old officer's house. " This is a cruel damper to me, as I distrust the meals of friends. I cast a melancholy look on d'Avaray and found his face as long as my own."

It must be remembered, however, that Monsieur was a wit, who prided himself on looking at everything from a jocose point of view, and that this characteristic helped him to preserve serenity in the midst of a life of catastrophe and disappointment. There is no

doubt, however, that his flippant attitude rather alienates our sympathy, and perhaps partly accounts for the Prince's want of general popularity, in spite of his many admirable qualities. The effect of this levity is specially unpleasing when united to a sentimentality which, though somewhat a fashion of the day, is also strongly characteristic of the man, and which leads him to refer constantly to d'Avaray—for whom, to his credit, he felt undying gratitude and affection—as “my dear d'Avaray,” and to say that whatever fate Providence had in store for him she could never take from him as much as she had given in granting him “such a friend as his dear d'Avaray,” who was more to him than himself.

As the journey was successful, it was not fruitful in incident. The English accent assumed by Monsieur and d'Avaray stood them in good stead everywhere; and Sayer, the English servant, assured them that every one thought they were foreigners. Sometimes the postilion who conducted them from one stopping-place to another did his duty well, sometimes he did it badly; and it gave Monsieur infantile pleasure to think that he could tell from the appearance of each whether he would be a good guide or not. Also it enlivened the way and was worthy of record, that when a postilion was specially incompetent, Monsieur nicknamed him the President of the Jacobin Club at the town to which he was conducting them.

The only serious contretemps that befell the fugitives, was the discovery at Soissons that a felloe of one of the wheels was broken. At first the blacksmith said that a new felloe must be made; and this would have necessitated a stoppage of two hours and a half. As it was then half-past eight in the morning, and messen-

gers were doubtless carrying the news of the Royal flight in every direction, any delay was most dangerous; and Monsieur and d'Avaray found it difficult to dissemble their anxiety before the crowd of spectators who had assembled to watch the proceedings. However, a brilliant idea occurred to d'Avaray; and he proposed that the broken felloe should be enclosed in a rim of iron, which would be a speedy means of mending the wheel, even if only in temporary fashion. This the blacksmith consented to do, though he doubted whether the repair would last out the journey.

While he was engaged on his work Monsieur was relieved of a great anxiety. On the way to Soissons he had missed the relic given him by Madame Elizabeth, and though affecting the philosophy then in vogue, he was decidedly superstitious. "The loss tormented me greatly," he says. However, being alone in the carriage while d'Avaray went into the inn to write letters, he happened to look into a portfolio his friend had left behind him; and there, to his surprise and joy, he found the missing relic. Monsieur adds, with an evident sense of supernatural interposition in the matter, that d'Avaray assured him that he had no recollection of having put the relic into his portfolio. The little image must have acquired additional value later on, when Monsieur realised that it was the last gift of a much-loved sister, whom on earth he was destined never to see again.

At one point in the tiring, jolting journey, d'Avaray became strangely silent and depressed, and Monsieur was puzzled at his sudden loss of spirits, till he discovered that the fatigue, anxiety, and terrible shaking d'Avaray was enduring had started some old mischief in his lung, and that he was spitting blood. Repose

and quiet were necessary conditions for cure, but under the circumstances they were absolutely unattainable. However, fortunately the invalid became better as the journey proceeded. A new sensation was provided by the postilion's declaration that it was impossible to drive that night as far as Mons, an opinion which Monsieur only altered by a gift of three "guinéés," reinforced by a thrilling story of a sick sister left at Soissons, for whom it was absolutely necessary to fetch a doctor from Mons without delay.

At last they arrived at Mons, and were out of French territory; but before this Monsieur had snatched the infamous tricoloured cockade out of his hat, and, quoting verses in his usual fashion, had handed it to his friend to be kept for ever, as Christopher Columbus had wished to keep his chains. They were now within measurable distance of safety and of a night's rest; and a polite discussion began as to who should occupy the bed, in the probable case of there being but one.

This argument occupied the time till they arrived at the outskirts of Mons, and stopped at a miserable inn, where Monsieur left the carriage for the first time for twenty-four hours, and found his legs so stiff that he could hardly stand. His first action was to kneel down and thank God for his safety. Arriving in the town itself, he without hesitation announced his name and title, and said that he intended to go to the Hôtel Couronne-Impériale. However, the troubles of the fugitives were not even then over, for the landlord, not apparently impressed by Monsieur's Royal titles, declared that he had no available room for the travellers. They were beginning to feel extremely depressed, when a woman's voice, which Monsieur at once

recognised as that of Madame de Balbi, was heard asking eagerly from upstairs, "Is it you, Monsieur d'Avaray?" At the welcome sound of these well-known accents they left the carriage, and were soon regaling themselves with a supper of cold chicken and claret provided by the thoughtful lady. She insisted on vacating her bed in favour of Monsieur, d'Avaray was established in her maid's room, and for the "first time for twenty months and a half," says the Prince—and the remark shows the strain he had endured—"I went to bed without dreading that I should be awakened by some scene of horror."

Next morning Fersen, one of the Queen's most devoted adherents, brought the news that the Royal Family had arrived at Bondi, and Monsieur's heart was full of joy, as he was certain that, once out of Paris, they would be in safety. During the afternoon he received visits from the Austrian officers and from some French visitors who were in the town, and later in the day he and d'Avaray travelled to Namur, where they were astonished to hear nothing further of the movements of the King and Queen, and as Monsieur felt anxious, he despatched a messenger to the Commandant of Luxembourg to ask for news. Next day, on their way from the town of Marche, they were met by the sad tidings of the arrest of the Royal Family at Varennes, and, feeling too miserable to continue their journey, they at once returned to the town. There Monsieur heard the details of the sad affair; and at first wondered whether it were not his duty to return to Paris. After a little reflection, however, he wisely decided that he would do no good to his family by sharing their fate, and would only risk his own life and that of his faithful friend d'Avaray, who had sworn

never to leave him. He had intended to go on to Liège, but the country was disturbed, and the route passed near the French frontier ; so he returned to Namur, where he found Madame, who felt as much indebted to Madame Gourbillon for her safe arrival as did her husband to d'Avaray.

Monsieur now determined to go on to Brussels to meet the Comte d'Artois, who arrived there shortly after him, and by whom he was greeted with the utmost affection. Monsieur speaks of his brother in the highest terms. "Far," he says, "from being angry after all the trouble he had taken, to see a colleague arrive who might deprive him of part of the glory, he was most anxious to tell me everything, to help me, to bring me forward, to make me of consequence ; in a word, it was not a brother I found in him, it was a most tender son." The glory which the Comte d'Artois obligingly shared with Monsieur may not appear to the onlooker to have been of dazzling effulgence ; but the fact remains that in spite of occasional disagreements, the brothers were at this time tenderly attached to each other, and that many of the mistakes made by the Comte de Provence, may be traced to the influence of the strong-willed and prejudiced Comte d'Artois.

Monsieur stayed eight days at Brussels, and says that they were the busiest he had ever passed. The Emperor Leopold II was in Italy, but Monsieur at once implored the Archduchess Marie Christine, Leopold's and Marie Antoinette's sister, to send troops into France to rescue the King and Queen. The Archduchess was much agitated and troubled about her sister's safety, but she hesitated to embark on war without Leopold's permission, and by July 4th, when the

Emperor returned from Padua, it was too late for rescue—the French Royal Family was closely confined in Paris.

Monsieur was most anxious to be invested with the powers of Regent, a proposition which had apparently been mooted by Louis XVI before the flight to Varennes, but which the King now refused to endorse, insisting, moreover, on making use of the Baron de Breteuil as confidential agent to the European Powers, instead of confiding his secrets to his brothers.

Monsieur, however, was full of his own importance at this time. “Placed suddenly,” he remarks, “at the head of one of the greatest machines which have ever existed, it was not only necessary to make it work, but also to learn what had already happened, as I had known nothing in my prison, and must use the experience of the past in connection with the present.”

For the chronicler living long afterwards and in possession of all the facts, it is easy to object that had the “machine” been allowed to remain inactive, many lives would have been saved, and Monsieur’s future course would not have been heavily weighted by the indignant cry of disappointed friends who clamoured for rewards for having risked their lives and honour in his service, and of furious patriots who never forgave him for allying himself with the enemies of his country. To Monsieur, however, his duty was clear, and he was happy to find himself working for the first time in an independent position; was strong, too, in the intention of returning to France in triumph at the end of a few months, after having delivered his misguided country from the horrors of anarchy, and restored to it the blessings of the Bourbon Government. Legitimacy was a religion to him, France and the Bourbons were inseparable; a short convulsion, an outbreak of rebel-

lious wickedness, and the nation would return penitent, to be punished, purged, and then graciously pardoned by a paternal King. If Monsieur were the instrument to bring about this happy change, surely a seat in the Council would at least be granted to him, and his influence would outweigh that of the Austrian Queen who thwarted his ambitions at every turn.

On July 3rd, Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois moved to Liège; on the 4th they went to Aix-la-Chapelle, where they met Monsieur's old friend and correspondent Gustavus III of Sweden, who raised their spirits by assurances of his devotion to the Royal cause in France, and declarations that he would put himself at the head of a League to fight the Revolution. After two days at Aix-la-Chapelle they moved on to Bonn, and on the 7th they arrived at Coblenz, the first rallying point of the *Émigrés*, who were for the next few years to be the perplexity, annoyance, sometimes, indeed, the laughing-stock of Europe.

The inn at Liège was crowded, and Monsieur was obliged to share a room with d'Avaray. He says: "This circumstance caused me real pleasure, as it reminded me of a time not long ago when, travelling nearly in the same country, we existed alone one for the other on the face of the earth."

Monsieur never forgot his gratitude to d'Avaray, who, ugly, delicate, and of only ordinary intelligence, was to be his faithful, disinterested friend for many years, was only to leave him when forced by failing health to seek a warmer climate than England, and, dying at Madeira, was to the end to be the recipient of the confidences and affection of the master to whom he had sacrificed his life, and whose triumphal return to France he was never destined to see.

CHAPTER VI

Arrival at Coblenz—Description of town—Schönbornlust—The Elector—Monsieur's position—Coblenz the last stronghold of the Ancien Régime—Life there—Calonne—Society—Madame de Balbi—Queen of Coblenz—Quarrels between her and d'Avary—Political intrigues—Monsieur's levity—Marie Antoinette and the King—Their distrust of the Princes—Their policy—Dissensions—Distress at Coblenz—Changes in Europe—War.

ON July 7, 1791, as we have already seen, the Comte de Provence arrived at Coblenz, where the Comte d'Artois was already established, and was received with the utmost affection and delight by his mother's brother, the Elector of Trèves, who, after showing his nephews honour by preparing a brilliant reception for them in the town, welcomed them himself outside it at the entrance of the Château of Schönbornlust, which he had placed at their disposal.

Schönbornlust was a vast building, and Monsieur, who as we know appreciated a sumptuous lodging, took possession of the whole of the right wing, Madame and her suite, including the Comtesse de Balbi, occupied the first floor of the left wing, and the Comte d'Artois took up his abode on the second floor. The cost of the Princes' establishment was enormous, and much of it was defrayed by the generous Elector. They had in their service twenty cooks; and although their uncle provided the necessaries, such as bread, wine, and meat, the expenses of their table

alone amounted to over a thousand crowns a day ; and the dishonesty and waste were so great, that after their departure it was necessary for the unfortunate Elector to spend sixty thousand francs in replacing eight hundred dozen missing napkins, and to buy a fresh set of table silver, as a hundred articles had disappeared.

The flight of the Royal Family, and the arrival at Coblenz of the Comte de Provence, had given an enormous impetus to the emigration from France ; and the ugly little town with its one fine square, in which was the Elector-Archbishop's magnificent residence, its one imposing street, and elsewhere nothing but narrow, dark alleys and uncomfortable houses, was in continual confusion from the ever-increasing crowd of fugitives who poured into it. From June 1791 to February 1792 three thousand French émigrés arrived, and in consequence lodging and provisions fetched exorbitant prices, and servants were almost impossible luxuries. Money—at least at first—poured into the town, but the virtue of the inhabitants was not improved by the influx of highborn idle French people tainted with the immorality of the Ancien Régime, who brought with them valets and maidservants with as little principle as their masters and less elegant reserve. Gaming and duelling became the fashion, and nightly brawls were rife, to the distress of the good Elector, who, being an ecclesiastic, and strongly opposed to the irreligion of the Revolution, would have preferred less laxity of morals in the party whose watchword was—or should have been—religion and their King.

Monsieur was not very popular with the Émigrés, who had not forgotten their indignation at his degrading

condescension in stooping to justify himself before the Municipality of Paris at the time of the Favras plot, and who considered him "not pure" in his politics, an opinion he quickly divined, and treated in his usual jesting manner. It was certainly true that, though the two brothers were apparently equally concerned in the measures taken in their name, there was a general impression, not unsupported by facts, to the effect that Monsieur lagged behind the Comte d'Artois in thoroughness, and might be suspected of leanings to the popular side. The horrors which took place in Paris, and the influence exercised over him by the Comte d'Artois and the other Émigrés with whom his lot was thrown, soon divested him of sympathies which, if developed, might possibly have shortened his exile from France; but in these early days they existed, and secured for him the distrust of the Émigrés.

In addition to this cause of unpopularity, his enthusiastic friendship for d'Avaray subjected him to hostile criticism, and his manner, which, except to his intimates, was haughty, and his strict and formal observance of the minutiae of etiquette, caused him to be disadvantageously compared with the Comte d'Artois, who with an unbending and unteachable pride in essentials, combined great personal charm.

Meanwhile Monsieur busied himself with the task of turning Schönbornlust into a second Versailles, and surrounded himself with all the pomp and trappings of Royalty under the Ancien Régime. The Royal Military Establishment, known as the "Maison du Roi," which had been suppressed in 1787 by Louis XVI, was re-established on a more elaborate scale than at Versailles, and, in addition, each of the Princes had

his own military establishment, distinguished by the different colours of its gay uniforms, which were decorated tastefully and expensively with braiding, crested buttons, and other elegancies. Recruiting for these Guard regiments went on throughout the provinces of France, and each fresh arrival in Colbentz was expected to enrol himself in their ranks. A large number of military appointments were created; and these were obtainable not by merit, but through the influence of the influential ladies at the Colbentz Court, reinforced by a liberal expenditure of money. Places were practically sold to the highest bidders, if they possessed the necessary aristocratic qualifications; and were in consequence often acquired by people who were so absolutely incompetent, that they were obliged secretly to employ instructors to coach them in at least the more elementary of their duties. Fortunately, the only responsibility really incumbent on those who occupied so-called important posts in the Guard, was to wear their uniform gracefully, and to pay highly for a military title. Naturally enough discipline was lax; and in consequence there were continual disturbances, and an importation into Colbentz of the legal methods of the Ancien Régime, even including "Lettres de Cachet," which at the request of the Comte d'Artois, instigated by Calonne, were issued freely by the Elector. As money grew scarce, several needy gentlemen among the Émigrés took up the office of spies, as well as other questionable means of providing for their necessities, crime became prevalent, and during eight months two hundred French gentlemen were confined in the Colbentz equivalent of the Bastille.¹

¹ *Histoire Secrète de Coblenz*, p. 49.

Meanwhile, at Schönbornlust the Princes pursued the even tenor of their way—the time of every action being arranged strictly according to the laws of etiquette. At 10 o'clock in the morning the “grand lever” took place, at 11 o'clock Mass was heard, the time for déjeuner was 12, and dinner was served at 6 o'clock. A Council, presided over by the Comte de Provence, took place every day, and each French arrival at Coblenz was bound to present himself to both the brothers in turn. The Comte de Provence generally received his visitors with dignified hauteur, his welcome being confined to a few words such as “That is well,” or, “I am very glad to see you again.” The Comte d'Artois was more affable, and therefore more popular.

Besides these fixed events, there were anxious consultations, interviews with secret agents, letters and despatches to read, and—especially in the case of the Comte de Provence—many to write; in fact it was a busy life, though fruitful in nothing useful.

The chief adviser of the Princes, the all-powerful director of their policy, was Louis XVI's ex-Minister, the frivolous and unscrupulous Calonne, whose acquaintance we have already made, and to whose policy Monsieur was a bitter opponent at the time of the Assembly of the Notables. It may seem curious that the Prince should have allowed himself to be led by a man for whom he must have felt complete distrust. We must remember, however, that Monsieur was not a strong man, and that one of the most interesting points in his personality, in contradistinction to that of the Comte d'Artois, is its gradual growth and development by adversity.

In 1791, in spite of the thirty-six years he had

lived, the Comte de Provence was a wholly undeveloped character, a baby in knowledge of the world, an elegant dilettante, whose life had been spent in the guarded precincts of the drawing-room. If we picture the unfortunate man torn from his position like a snail from its shell, and sent out into a world of which he knew nothing, it is easy to see that his first and very natural impulse would be to make his surroundings resemble as much as possible the environment to which he was used, and without which life seemed impossible. The next would be to seek for advice from some one who appeared to be better informed than himself; and he would find this person in the Comte d'Artois, who had always led a less carefully guarded life than he, and was now in advance of him by a year's experience of this new and perplexing situation. Besides, the younger brother possessed a simplicity and directness which would invest him with much power over a subtle undecided man who had not yet found his way among unaccustomed circumstances. The Comte d'Artois invariably knew his own mind, and everything was absolutely clear to him—an advantage he derived partly from the fact that he always talked himself, and never stopped to listen to any one whose sentiments did not chime in with his own.

At the side of the Comte d'Artois was Calonne, who has been called the evil genius of the Revolution: "a man of the world" above all things; brilliant, inventive, full of expedients, as decided in his opinions about everything as was the Comte d'Artois. Monsieur had his own party; Jaucourt headed it as did Calonne that of the Comte d'Artois; and between the partisans of the two brothers arose constant jealousies and dissensions, which do not, however, seem to have dis-

turbed their affection for each other. The Artois party was decidedly in the ascendant, for every one realised Calonne to be all-powerful ; and Monsieur was, as we know, unpopular. Calonne at one time went so far as to abuse him, as well as the Austrian Emperor, in a magazine called *Journal des Princes, frères du Roi*, and Monsieur on this occasion was very angry, and managed to have a censor appointed, and the name of the journal changed to *Contre-Révolution*.

Life at the Princes' little Court was gay and lively. Madame Bertin, the great Parisian milliner, had accompanied her clients into exile ; and though there were temporary discomforts, even hardships, to be endured in the way of lodging, the utmost lightheartedness prevailed, for the gay throng were sure that in the course of a few months they would return to Paris, and would laugh together over the adventures of their picnic expedition to Coblenz.

There were many gaieties to attend, and expensive and varied toilettes were necessary ; so that people spent as much as they had done in Paris, and purses began to empty.

On Thursdays and Sundays the Elector gave a grand reception at his residence in the town, and all the French in Coblenz were invited. Every one met at seven in the evening in the great gallery, and the Elector, accompanied by the two Princes, soon made his appearance, and went the round of his guests. Later, each of the three Royalties presided at a card-table ; while sweet drinks were offered to every one, and those who wished to pay their court placed themselves near the card tables, the men standing and the women sitting.

On Tuesdays, the Princes gave a dinner at two

o'clock, and held a reception afterwards, and on Saturdays it was the turn of the Grand Chamberlain, who had a beautiful house on the Moselle, and entertained all the German society and many of the French.

Besides these elaborate entertainments, many pretty women had salons where gaming was as high, love-making as serious an occupation, and intrigues were as prevalent as in the palmy days of Versailles. Pre-eminent among the salons, were those of the ladies termed the three Queens of the Emigration, the Princess of Monaco, a magnificent blonde who had been for years the faithful friend of the Prince of Condé, and was eventually to become his wife, Madame de Polastron, beloved by the Comte d'Artois, a gentle and retiring woman, and, last but not least, the Comtesse de Balbi, the only woman among the *Émigrés* who wielded the sceptre of political power.

The Comte de Provence might be overshadowed by his brother and by Calonne; but in the social world, his favourite, though hated, feared, and vilified, reigned supreme. Jaucourt was her devoted slave, and the Russian Ambassador Romanzof, who had realised the advantage of extreme friendliness with her, had become the most important man in Coblenz.¹ Monsieur consulted her on all political matters, and she delighted in the feeling that she held the strings of many intrigues in her delicate fingers, and was in truth the Queen of the Emigration.

In the house near Schönbornlust, with which Monsieur had presented her, she gave lively little suppers, at which he was always present, and the conversation was most sparkling.

The Comte de Neuilly, one of the gayest and most

¹ Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. i. p. 107.

fashionable of the young Émigrés, and a great friend of Madame de Balbi's son, says: "Every evening, after the Comtesse de Balbi had performed her duties to Madame, she returned home, and her guests began to assemble. But first she changed her dress; her hair was arranged in front of a little table which was brought from another room; her dress and even her chemise was put on in our presence; it was the received thing, and it seemed to us so natural that we never even thought about it. I must say that, in spite of pretty quick eyes, I never saw more than if she had had ten screens round her. We were there, Piré, Balbi, and I, young fellows of no importance, although we wore uniform, and were already men; but Monsieur was also present, and he paid no more attention than we did. Generally, he remained with his back turned, seated in an armchair in front of the fireplace, his hand resting on his crooked stick, the shadow of which thrown in silhouette, made the profile of Louis XVI. He had a habit of pushing the end of his stick into his shoe. During Madame de Balbi's toilette, which hardly lasted ten minutes, the conversation pursued its course. It continued in the same gay familiar tone, after the arrival of M. d'Avaray, of the Comte de Vêrac, and of the very small number of guests who were admitted to these evenings. We talked of theatres, music, news from Paris, songs, nonsense, gossip. Monsieur told anecdotes to perfection, and knew how to gloss over what might sometimes be broad in them. Games were played, rhymes were made, sometimes there was reading aloud . . . occasionally we had to make verses, and his Royal Highness condescended to give us lessons in prosody."¹

¹ Reiset, *La Comtesse de Balbi*, p. 228

Madame de Balbi's temper was as imperious and as uncontrolled as ever ; she was jealous of anybody and everybody whom she suspected of influencing Monsieur ; so she naturally became bitterly hostile to d'Avaray, and did not scruple to make herself disagreeable to him. One morning, when he was assisting at the "chemise blanche," the same ceremony as the evening one already described, she did her best to rouse his temper ; and at last cried, speaking of a lady to whom he was deeply attached : "Do not talk to me about Madame de. . . . To speak candidly, she is an idiot !" D'Avaray managed to keep his temper and to answer her calmly ; but when he tried to defend the absent lady, Madame de Balbi became so furious that Monsieur and most of those who were present thought it prudent to retire.

The next day, when d'Avaray presented himself at her toilette, she burst into a torrent of abuse, to which he answered that he was sure he had never spoken to her without observing the rules of politeness and respect, and that he could bring forward a witness to prove this. "I should like very much to know who it is who would dare to say you were in the right !" replied the Comtesse, and d'Avaray answered promptly and triumphantly, "Monsieur does."

He adds : "A volcano, a whirlwind of flames, tempest and thunder are not more violent or destructive. The tables, the chairs, the cap,—everything in the room is scattered and dispersed. In vain the frightened audience try to resist the torrent."

"Horses, horses ! I must leave at once !" cries the furious favourite, tearing about like a mad woman : "I will not bear such an affront !" ¹

This, it may be remarked, is the possibly exaggerated

¹ Reiset, *La Comtesse de Balbi*, p. 246.

testimony of an enemy, but the picture is curious, and is worth citing. For Coblenz was the last citadel of a dying world, the world where life for a Grand Seigneur or a Grande Dame was inexpressibly delightful, yet, where, while suavity in intercourse was a fine art, what would seem to us familiar impertinence was quite permissible in a great lady. Much that was evil was swept away by the Revolution, many dark places were cleansed, many monstrous anomalies righted, yet, because perhaps of its strangeness, there is haunting fascination in that Ancien Régime, for which there was now no resting place in a busy world yearning for practical values, and not overburdened with reverence.

The Comte de Provence seems at first sight to be one of the most polished pillars of conservatism; scented, artificial, and courtly, he moved in an atmosphere of stately privilege; yet even he, because of a certain liberality of mind of which he could not divest himself, was "a jacobin" in the eyes of the thorough-going exponents of the Ancien Régime. In the future, he would learn, though reluctantly, to fit himself to the new world, and would become the wise and politic Louis XVIII, while the "émigré" proper would never gain anything from experience, but on his return to what seemed to him a hopelessly vulgarised and transmogrified France, would fight a despairing battle for his unchangeable creed; and though he could not permanently stem the flood of the new ideas, would at any rate succeed in hampering the Government and in bringing it eventually to ruin. This was his unfortunate side; in the ascendant, brave, insouciant, and dashing, surrounded by what he loved, we look on him for the last time in the ugly German town of Coblenz.

Meanwhile, while detailing their amusements, we must not forget the fact that the Princes were busily engaged in political intrigue, with the object of rousing Europe to undertake an armed intervention in the affairs of France. Headed by the *Émigrés*, under the leadership of the two Princes, the Comte de Provence being invested with the title and powers of Regent, and acting in the name of the captive King—an idea which had first been suggested to him by Mirabeau—France was to be besieged by an Allied Army of European Powers, who were to rescue the Royal Family, re-establish the Ancien Régime, punish the Jacobites, and chastise yet more severely the “*monarchiens*” or moderates, to whom the thoroughgoing *Émigrés* bore even more deadly hatred than to the Revolutionary party.

Vistas of power as respectively Regent and Lieutenant-General of the kingdom floated before the eyes of both the Princes; but though they have been bitterly blamed for the selfishness of their policy, there is no doubt that they were sincere in their belief that the course they proposed was the wise one. They evidently considered it absolutely impossible that the Revolutionary party would ever proceed to such extremities, that they would dare to threaten the lives of the Royal Family. Unfortunately, too, they felt a not altogether unreasonable contempt for Louis XVI, whose troubles they considered to be greatly of his own making; and a certain distrust for Marie Antoinette, whom they credited with complete devotion to Austrian interests. They therefore refused to listen to the representations of the unfortunate King and Queen; and persisted in believing that any orders they might issue were given under coercion. Follow-

ing this policy, and with apparently no conception of the gravity of the crisis, or the perilous position of the Royal Family, when Louis XVI wrote an official letter in September 1791 ordering his brothers to return to Paris—an order which it must be allowed he did not intend them to obey—their answer was so violent that the Revolutionary party were furious, and the unfortunate Queen wept, and cried that the King's brothers would bring the Royal Family to destruction.

Monsieur's levity at this time was certainly astonishing, though of a piece with the tone of his account of his escape from France. On December 6, 1791, he received an important communication from Paris. It ran as follows :

“ Louis Joseph Stanislas Xavier, French Prince. The Assemblée Nationale requires you in virtue of the French Constitution, Act III, chapter II, section iii, article I, to return into the kingdom within two months from this day. Failing this, and at the expiration of the said delay, you will lose your eventual right to the Regency.”

To this Monsieur replied : “ Members of the French Assembly calling itself National. Sane reason requires you, in virtue of Act I, chapter I, section i, article I of the imprescriptible laws of common sense, to return to your senses within two months from this day. Failing this, and at the expiration of the said delay, you will be supposed to have abdicated your right to the quality of reasonable beings, and will be looked on as violent madmen, fit for an asylum.”

Thus Monsieur enjoyed his joke, apparently heedless whether or no he would goad to dangerous fury the men in whose hands the King and Queen were help-

less captives. That he had, however, no conception of the gravity of the crisis, is proved by a letter he wrote to Louis XVI towards the end of 1791. "Brother," he says, "I have written to you ; but the letter was sent by the post, and I could tell you nothing. We two here form but one person ; our feelings, principles, and ardour in serving you are alike. If we are addressed by those people" [the Constitutional party] "we shall not listen ; if by you, we shall listen, but shall go straight on our way ; so if they make you say anything to us, do not trouble yourself about it. You may feel quite comfortable about your safety . . . we only exist to serve you ; we work for that with ardour, and everything is going well. Even our enemies have too much interest in your preservation to commit a useless crime which would complete their ruin."¹

What could be said in answer to such a letter ? The only possible course for the captive family in Paris was to ignore the doings of the Princes. "It is at the end of this week," Marie Antoinette writes on August 21, 1791, "that the Charter" [the document embodying the laws of the new Constitution which the King was required to sign] "will be presented to the King. . . . The moment is terrible ; but why are we left in total ignorance of what is going on outside ? It is at present necessary to follow a course which will inspire confidence, and will at the same time baffle and overthrow the monstrous affair" [the Revolutionary Constitution] "which it is necessary to adopt. For this reason it is necessary that the French, especially the King's brothers, shall remain in the background, and that the allied Powers shall act alone.

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. i. p. 94.

No prayer, no reasoning on our part can make the Princes do this ; the Emperor must insist on it, that is the only possible way, and it will do me in particular much service. You yourself know the evil insinuations and evil designs of the Émigrés. Cowards ! After having abandoned us, they wish to insist that we alone shall endanger ourselves, and shall serve all their interests. I do not accuse the King's brothers. I believe their hearts and intentions to be pure ; but they are surrounded and directed by ambitious people, who will ruin them, after having ruined us first." ¹

The King and Queen's policy throughout this time seems to have been to deceive the Revolutionary party by the King's pretended acceptance of the Constitution, while the Émigrés were kept in inaction in the background ; partly because the Queen feared that any movement on their part would implicate her and the King in the eyes of the Revolutionary party, and partly because she felt an intense jealousy of them, and a distrust of their intentions towards her, so that she would almost have preferred remaining in the hands of the Revolutionaries to putting herself in the Émigrés' power.

Marie Antoinette's plans for the action of the foreign Powers, particularly of her brother the Emperor of Austria, varied. When she felt hopeful about internal affairs she only asked for a peaceful Congress of the European Powers, but when matters seemed desperate she at once begged for an advance on France of the allied armies of Europe. This step was apparently to be undertaken ostensibly against the will of the Royal Family, who were only to throw off the mask and proclaim a counter-Revolution

¹ Arneth, *Marie Antoinette's Letters to Joseph II and Leopold II.*

when France, or at least the Revolutionary party, was prostrate before the enemy. The Comte de Provence, on the other hand, was, as we know, convinced that it was necessary for the Émigrés to be in the van of the attacking army, so that the war might not assume an aspect of foreign aggression, but that of a protest of Royalism against anarchism.

The difficulties of the position, and the horrors of the captivity of the Royal Family, were increased by the fact that even in the Tuileries, and later on in the Temple, counsels were divided ; for Madame Elizabeth took the side of her younger brothers, in whom she felt absolute trust, and was therefore at variance with the Queen, who complained that no plans could be discussed in her sister-in-law's presence. It is not necessary to enter here into the question of the wisdom or unwisdom of the policy pursued by the King and Queen ; but one thing is certain—that it was a policy which, to ensure success, demanded the utmost secrecy, caution, and diplomacy ; and it is impossible not to see some wisdom in Monsieur's remonstrances a little later, when the King, after promising to act in conjunction with his brothers, had to their intense indignation sent, unknown to them, a secret political agent to St. Petersburg, in spite of the fact that the Princes' envoy, who was understood to represent the Royal cause in France, was already at the Czarina's Court. At this juncture Monsieur wrote to Marie Antoinette as follows : "What can be Monsieur de Bombelles' mission ? I can only see two possible objects ; that of sharpening the Czarina's zeal for the good cause, or that of diminishing it. In the first case, what will you answer to the Jacobins who will reproach you with accepting the Constitution publicly,

yet working to overthrow it? And if they bring forward proofs of their assertion? . . . Let us not imagine such a thing! It is too horrible.”

The result was certainly destined to be horrible; for Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette eventually paid with their lives for the Jacobins' discovery of their double dealing and secret intrigues. Yet what were they to do? The situation was impossible.

Moreover, an insuperable obstacle to the policy of which the Queen was the originator, was to be found in the fact that it was not dependent upon herself but on the foreign Powers; and that they, being naturally guided by their own interests, were not disposed to suit their movements to her behests. Unfortunately, no one was anxious to fight against France except the *Émigrés*; and, according to the scheme proposed by the King and Queen, it was absolutely necessary to keep them in a condition of quiescence. To do this seemed as impossible as to rouse the Powers to action, for the Princes stirred Europe to continual agitation by their impulsive doings. They wrote to Catherine II of Russia begging for a million roubles, so that they might enlist Swedes and Germans, as well as fresh French regiments, in their little army. They were, moreover, determined that one of the two brothers should be present at the Conference which was to take place at Pilnitz, between the King of Prussia and Marie Antoinette's brother, the Emperor of Austria, on the question of intervention in French affairs. The Comte d'Artois, as thoroughly untainted with Revolutionary uncleanness, was chosen as the delegate of the *Émigrés*; and arrived incognito at Vienna, to the disgust of the King and Emperor, who felt obliged, however, to receive him with cordiality. Louis XVI

had just accepted the Constitution—by his own free will, the Emperor affected to believe—and, in spite of the strenuous efforts of the Comte d'Artois, the only result of the Conference was an extremely vague document to the effect that the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria considered the situation of Louis XVI “an object of common interest to all the Sovereigns of Europe ;” and that, if the other Powers would join them, they were prepared to muster their armies and to prepare for war, with the object of re-establishing monarchical government in France.

The King and Emperor would promise nothing more definite than this, in spite of the Comte d'Artois' earnest solicitations ; but the manifesto was received with the utmost fury in France, and the Revolutionaries were urged by it to fresh excesses.

On the Comte d'Artois' arrival in Coblenz, where Monsieur was waiting in the utmost anxiety to hear the result of the Conference, the Princes consulted together, and managed to intensify this effect in Paris, by most unwisely issuing a proclamation, in which they appeared to believe that the Pílnitz promulgation meant an immediate declaration of war against France ; while they also declared that the King had only signed the Constitution under compulsion. In consequence of this imprudent step, the Emperor informed the Princes that if they disseminated manifestoes differing from the Agreement of Pílnitz, he would be forced to disavow them.

Towards the end of the year 1791, the Princes' position at Coblenz became deplorable. Europe set them at nought, the Great Powers refused to move at their bidding, while Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette tried to cajole them into quiet by pretending to trust

them, and putting them into direct communication with Breteuil, the trusted agent of the Tuileries in the outside world. However, to the Princes' intense humiliation and indignation, they discovered that Breteuil had orders from Louis XVI to keep many matters secret, and, on the other hand, expected them to confide everything to him. The Princes retaliated by refusing to obey the King, whom they affected to consider as acting under coercion, and by treating his envoys with contempt; while, in defiance of him, they despatched secret agents to all the foreign Courts, and thus kept Europe in a ferment. The Revolutionary Government were not, however, disposed to remain long passive under this continual provocation. The *Assemblée Législative* had now taken the place of the *Assemblée Constituante*, and orders were issued from Paris to the Elector that the troops at Coblenz must at once be dispersed—an order the Elector of Trèves, terrified at a possible invasion of his territory, was obliged to pass on at once to his nephews.

Meanwhile, *Émigrés* crowded out of France; the palmy days of prosperity were over; distress at Coblenz became acute; and during the winter from 1791 to 1792 the Princes were forced to watch helplessly the ever-increasing sufferings of their followers. The realities of life were pressing upon the Comte de Provence; and though his pluck, courage, and power of seeing everything in a humorous light never failed him, he began physically to show signs of the strain he was enduring—a strain which would never relax, but would press on him increasingly, till, in spite of his gay spirit and serenity, he became prematurely old; worn out by hardship, trouble, and disappointment.

Many changes had taken place in Europe. On

March 1, 1792, Marie Antoinette's brother, the Emperor Leopold II, died and was succeeded by his son, Francis II; and a fortnight later Gustavus III of Sweden, the principal ally of the French Monarchy in Europe, was assassinated at a masked ball at Stockholm. The King of Sweden's death was a terrible shock to the Princes—to Monsieur in particular, of whom he was a personal friend. However, in April the Émigrés were encouraged by the important news that revolutionary France had taken up an offensive position, and that Dumouriez had published an ultimatum ordering the cessation of the mustering of troops on the Austrain frontier; while the King and Queen, whose position was now almost desperate, implored the help of their nephew, Francis II.

On April 5 war was formally declared between France and the allied armies of Austria and Prussia; and the Elector begged his nephews to quit Trèves and to move to the other side of the Rhine.

This they refused to do, and the Elector did not press the matter; for he was certain, as they were, that France would be beaten by the Allies, and that the Princes would return to their country in triumph. Their one endeavour now was to insist that the Émigré army should enter France with the Allies—should, if possible, form the vanguard of the invading force—and that Monsieur should be endued with the title and powers of Regent of the kingdom. Louis XVI still wished the Émigrés to keep themselves apart from the allied armies, and to join in no military operations; but the envoy who proposed this to the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois was received with the utmost haughtiness, and the Princes were indignant at the proposition. The Duke of Brunswick was to be Generalissimo of

the allied armies ; and in the early summer of 1792, Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois were most busily employed in preparing to receive him with due honour at Coblentz, and in making their own military preparations. These were difficult, as hardly a third of the Émigré army were provided with arms, and the whole force was ragged, hungry, and in the utmost destitution. Their courage was high, however, for they were returning to their own country ; and even Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois did not appear to feel dismay at the idea that foreign troops were forcing for them the entrance to France.

CHAPTER VII

Campaign against France—The Duke of Brunswick—The Princes with the Army—Terrible retreat—Arrival in Liège—Distress—Monsieur goes to Hamm—Hears of Louis XVI's execution—His declaration—Tokens from imprisoned Royal Family—Intrigues and expeditions—Monsieur at Verona—Rupture with Madame de Balbi—His letter on the subject to Madame—Death of Louis XVII—Monsieur assumes the title of King—An Englishman's opinion of him—He is forced to leave Verona—Goes to Condé's camp—His attempted assassination—Life at Blanckenburg.

THE beginning of the campaign was marked with disappointment, for, owing to Breteuil's objections, Monsieur was not appointed Regent, in spite of Louis XVI's consent and the apparent approval of the Allies. However, the army of Condé and that of the Princes were allowed to march with Brunswick's forces, the Comte de Provence, the Comte d'Artois, and their 12,000 men being among the Prussian contingent.

Before starting, the Princes went to Aix-la-Chapelle to assist at the crowning of Francis II, and then were present at the gaities attendant on the meeting between him and the King of Prussia at Mayence. They were in the highest spirits—spirits we cannot grudge them, for they were enjoying the last gleam of prosperity which was to visit them for many years. The Duke of Brunswick, however, who was to act as Commander-in-Chief to the allied armies, soon realised the utter uselessness of the undisciplined, unarmed, unpaid, and overservanted battalions of the Émigrés, and began

to feel distaste for the whole expedition ; though the Princes assured him that, when they arrived in France, the whole population would rise for the Royalists.

The campaign opened ; and Longwy and Verdun were soon taken by the Allies. This was, however, only a first step, and the Émigré army was in a starving condition, while the invasion of France excited hostile demonstrations among the inhabitants, instead of the gratitude and enthusiasm which had been confidently expected. The weather was terrible, the roads were morasses of mud, and dysentery broke out among the troops ; while the Émigrés, who had hoped to be in a prominent position in the army, soon found that this was not the intention of the Allies. One of their number says : “ I remarked with sorrow that we seemed only destined to play a very secondary part. The King of Prussia dragged us after him, and we were almost abandoned ; the Princes had no money, and were quite unable to supply the wants of their army, or those of an infinity of impoverished gentlemen whose zeal much transcended their resources.”¹

Worse was to follow, for Brunswick was furious with the Princes, who had, he said, deceived him as to the state of feeling in France ; and after being defeated at the battle of Valmy, in which he would not allow the Emigrés to take part, and entering into sundry unsuccessful negotiations with Dumouriez, he announced that the campaign was at an end, and insisted on beating an immediate retreat.

The Princes were not admitted to Brunswick's confidence or consulted about anything, being treated as people of no importance ; but when the retreat began,

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Morielles*, p. 41.

their position was terrible. The campaign, on which their fondest hopes had so long been centred, had ended in utter disaster; they had failed to rescue the King and Royal Family, and were now homeless and penniless, exiles from their country, and dependent for the means of life on the charity of foreigners.

To add to their sufferings, they were surrounded by unfortunate people who—possibly rendered unjust by despair—attributed their misfortunes to the heedless conduct of the Princes at Coblenz, and who prayed for assistance which the latter were not able to give. At last, in shame and anguish they were obliged to hide themselves from their miserable army, during the horrors of that terrible disease- and famine-ridden retreat through a hostile land. The Comte de Moriolles, an intimate friend of d'Avaray, gives a graphic account of their situation. He says: "I arrived on the second day at Longuyon, a town of considerable size, where was an immense blacksmith's forge; in a large hall, intended for coal, lay 600 corpses which had been collected there, and a number of sick people who would soon increase the number of the dead. I turned away from this scene of desolation, and went into an inn of which nothing now remained but four walls, where at least the horses might be rested for a minute; there I learnt that our Princes and several people of their suite, had spent the night in a house which was pointed out to me, and to which I hastened. Doors and windows were hermetically closed, which did not prevent me from knocking for several minutes without getting an answer; but at last a shutter was partly opened, and d'Avaray appeared at the window.

" 'Why, it is you!' he said. 'Come in quickly, by the window, which I will open.' And as soon as I

had entered the room he shut it again, and said : ‘ We are obliged to hide ourselves, and only go out in the evening, to escape the laments and the prayers which we cannot satisfy, and which tear our hearts. What misfortunes ! and what treason ! What will become of us ? ’ ”¹

Hungry and barefooted, the unfortunate soldiers were treated everywhere like outcast dogs, but eventually Condé’s army, which had not fought at all, was taken into Austrian pay ; as “ otherwise they would infest the highroads, the neighbouring States would refuse to receive them, and Austria would be forced to exterminate them.” In Germany, Belgium, and Italy, the Revolutionary armies were victorious. Monsieur took refuge in Coblenz, but was obliged to fly before the conquering French army ; while at Trèves his carriages were seized by his creditors.

In November, the unfortunate Princes arrived in Liège with the débris of their army ; and while the Comte d’Artois remained there, Monsieur, like his brother in a penniless condition, went on to Namur, where he waited for permission from the King of Prussia to seek refuge in his dominions. In the middle of December the Princes obtained leave from Frederick William to reside at Hamm, in Westphalia ; and at the same time they received from Catherine of Russia a welcome present of 750,000 francs, part of which went to supply the pressing needs of Condé’s army.

Monsieur arrived at Hamm near the end of January, and it was there that he waited anxiously for news of the progress of the King’s trial, and heard of his death on the scaffold. On January 28, 1793, he published a Declaration proclaiming the Dauphin King

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Morielles*, p. 53.

of France, under the title of Louis XVII, and taking to himself the position of Regent. The Declaration was, as might naturally be expected, strongly and indignantly anti-revolutionary, and Monsieur wrote at the same time to the gentlemen of Auvergne: "As for me, to avenge the blood of the King, my brother, to release my family, to place my nephew on the Throne, and to give back to my country its ancient Constitution, or perish with you on the ruins of it, such is my vow, such the one object of my ambition."

This was distinctly the language of non-compromise—language which would be hardly more unwelcome to the violent Revolutionaries than to the moderate party who desired to preserve the Monarchy, but to introduce a new Constitution somewhat on the model of the English legislature; and who, christened "Monarchiens," by the ultra-Royalists, were even more disliked by them than were the Jacobins. Nevertheless, though we may wish that Monsieur had managed rather earlier to realise that France would never return to that Ancient Régime in which he had been educated, a politic liberalism would surely be out of place when he was trembling with indignation and sorrow at the murder of his brother. The Declaration, however, was hardly noticed in France, for of what importance were the words of a poor, proscribed, penniless Prince, who might call himself Regent if it so pleased him, but who had not the slightest power to enforce his claims to the position, or to compel the European Powers to recognise it?

Catherine II, to whom the Comte d'Artois paid a visit about this time, was the one person who seemed really friendly to the Émigrés, and even she was disgusted with the Royalists who surrounded the Prince.

“What can be done,” she cried, “with such presumptuous, vain, frivolous people?” And she refused to help, except with generous gifts of money, unless England would join her, which England declined to do. Therefore the Comte de Provence could do nothing in his retreat at Hamm but write letters couched in the most pathetic and flowery language to the different European nations, issue manifestoes in his supposed position as Regent, and despatch secret agents in all directions, a business at which he showed considerable cleverness, for his envoys—unlike those of his brother—were seldom caught.

During the sojourn of the Princes at Hamm, one melancholy satisfaction was accorded to them—a satisfaction which proved that, in spite of dissensions among the Royal Family, real affection existed among its members, and that even Marie Antoinette considered that the exasperating imprudences of her brothers-in-law were mistakes of the head, and not of the heart. For one day an emissary from Monsieur de Jarjayes, one of the Queen’s most faithful and heroic adherents, arrived at Hamm, bringing with him a letter, and a most precious packet containing Louis XVI’s seal, his ring, and the hair of all the prisoners in the Temple. It was the Princesses’ most earnest wish that these melancholy and precious souvenirs should be given to the Princes, and the Queen had charged Monsieur de Jarjayes with the commission.

On May 14, 1793, Jarjayes received the following letter from Monsieur :

“You have procured for me the most precious possession I have in the world, the only real consolation I have felt since our troubles ; my one longing

now is to be able to show the beings who are more dear to me than life itself, of whom you have given me news, how much I love them, how deeply their letter and the other tokens of their friendship and confidence have touched my heart with the tenderest feelings. But I cannot hope for so much happiness, and I am sure that if you knew of a way of doing this you would point it out to me. I should have liked to have seen you, to have expressed to you my gratitude, to have talked with you about them, about the smallest details, about the services you have rendered them. But I can but approve of the reasons which keep you in Piedmont. Continue to serve our unfortunate young King as you have served the brother whom I shall regret all my life. Tell Monsieur de Joly from me how well satisfied I am with his conduct, and both of you count for ever on me!

“LOUIS STANISLAS XAVIER.”¹

In the shadow of death dissensions had faded away; but the Princes could do nothing to save those dear to them; they could only wait in agonised suspense, for Europe was deaf to their prayers for help. Reports came to them from time to time of events which might be favourable to their cause; the French General Dumouriez deserted to the Austrians, and excited their ardent hopes that his defection might mean the ending of the Revolution. But no. In spite of there being one French General the less, the Revolution, though soiled with horrors, never hesitated in its triumphant march. The insurrections in Poitou, La Vendée, Le Maine, and Brittany were a more legitimate cause for rejoicing, and for the next few years a constant

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Goguelat*, p. 80.

stream of agents bearing letters and manifestoes, would go backwards and forwards between Brittany and wherever the Princes might be located.

The Vendean War kept the Comte d'Artois, in particular, in a continual state of excitement, for the heroic defenders of the Monarchy in France longed for one of the Princes to lead them; and the Comte d'Artois, as Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, was always on the point of starting to take command of the Royalist army, and was always prevented by some absolutely insurmountable obstacle. Sometimes England objected, and as England, though refusing to act openly, provided the sinews of war, with the object of keeping her formidable rival France in a disturbed condition, the Comte d'Artois bowed to her will. "It would always have been possible to get into a boat," said Napoleon, when he heard that the Prince's project was prevented by England's opposition; but the Comte d'Artois was not Napoleon.

Later on, assisted by England, Puisaye led an ill-fated expedition to the assistance of the Vendean, was defeated by Hoche at Quiberon, and covered reams of paper to Monsieur—who had then assumed the title of King—defending himself from certain charges of treachery which were brought against him, and abusing other people, who replied by recriminations as to the causes of the mistakes which had sacrificed the lives of many brave men.¹

Returning to the fortunes of Monsieur at Hamm, we find that towards the end of 1793, after vainly trying to induce England or Spain to recognise his title of Regent, he could not bear inaction any longer, and determined to make his way to Toulon and Lyons,

¹ *Puisaye Papers* (British Museum), vol. xxxiv. g 3.

the former town having opened her port to the Spanish and English, who had entered it in the name of Louis XVII ; while Lyons was making a heroic defence against the Republican armies, the news of whose victory, however, reached Monsieur before he left Hamm. He also received tidings of the execution of Marie Antoinette, and it was with a heavy heart that he started on his journey.

Monsieur was evidently anxious to keep up the dignity of his position as Regent, for when he and the Comte d'Artois separated, not to meet again for seven years, he left directions that while his brother's orders as to schemes already started must be obeyed as though they were his own, fresh plans must only be originated by him.

Monsieur travelled as the Comte de l'Isle, and at Verona was greeted with the tragic news that another of his hopes had vanished, as Toulon had submitted to the Republic. There seemed now no abiding-place on earth for him, for Spain continued to refuse his urgent prayers for asylum, and he could not bear to be far from the French frontier, so did not wish to ask for one in Russia.

The Bourbon Family were in a melancholy and divided condition at this time. Madame Elizabeth had perished, Louis XVII and his sister Madame Thérèse, afterwards Duchesse d'Angoulême, were imprisoned in the Temple, the Comtesse de Provence and the Comtesse d'Artois had found an asylum at Turin with their father the King of Sardinia, and the Comte d'Artois was still at Hamm, apparently, as usual, making preparations for his ever-deferred descent on Brittany.

In June 1794 the Regent settled at Verona, and found himself in such discomfort and poverty that it

was impossible to summon his wife to his side, so she remained at Turin ; while, as though misfortune was determined to do her worst, another terrible blow fell on his devoted head.

In April 1792, when the King of Sardinia had offered an asylum to the Comtesse of Provence, Madame de Balbi had accompanied her from Coblenz to Turin ; but the lively lady soon tired of Victor Amédée's austere Court, and went to Luxembourg ; and from there, after the retreat of Brunswick's army, she paid occasional visits to Monsieur at Namur. She eventually settled at Brussels, whence she followed the various tergiversations of the political situation with the utmost interest, and kept up a lively correspondence with Monsieur, whom she addressed in her letters as *cher frère*.

Brussels was a gay place ; Madame de Balbi, as we know, delighted in society, especially in that of the opposite sex, and scandal soon began to couple her name with that of the Comte Archambaud de Perigord, the hero of many adventures as a lady-killer. The matter soon became serious, for Madame de Balbi was too prominent a lady for anything concerning her to remain long secret ; and the story of the liaison reached the ears of d'Avaray. He heard it with the utmost emotion, for it was calculated to cover the name of his beloved Master with ridicule ; but for a time he did not dare to do more than to endeavour to enlighten the Regent by hints, which of course were not understood. However, when the Regent heard from the faithless lady announcing her approaching arrival at Verona, and passed her epistle on to his friend, d'Avaray felt that he could keep the secret no longer. The letter arrived when several of the

Regent's intimates were present, and d'Avaray, after reading it with much agitation, went at once into his private room, where Monsieur followed him ; and as soon as they were alone, d'Avaray told him the whole story. "Here then is a reward for twenty years of affection!" he cried indignantly. "At a time when everything crushes you, when even the least influential of your enemies, the weakest of your allies, your very party itself spends its time in lessening the respect felt for you, a lost woman, the scandal of Europe, insults your misfortunes, and is coming to soil your retreat. No! your servants will not bear it. I do not know the line others may take ; but listen to the oath I swear : if Madame de Balbi enters the house, I leave it the next day. Your honour comes first, your favour afterwards!"

"While I was speaking my unfortunate Prince was overwhelmed with grief, though roused from time to time by the temerity of my words and the force of my reasoning. When for a moment he uncovered his face, I saw him redden and turn pale almost at the same moment. I could not foretell what to expect, when in a heartrending voice he said :

"Ah ! my friend, do not overwhelm me !"

"It would be betraying you to spare you."

"In pity leave me ; the anguish I feel does not allow me the power of putting two ideas together. Go, we shall see each other again. . . . I want to be alone."

Later, the Regent told d'Avaray with tears in his eyes of the decision he had taken. He said : "This meeting is certainly impossible ; I realise it as you do. Whatever happens, the charm and constant habit of my life must be broken. I thank you for

having spoken to me as a courageous and faithful friend should.”¹

So ended the love-story of Monsieur's life. He had chosen badly ; and was not destined, like the Comte d'Artois and the Prince de Condé, to have his troubles softened by the joys of faithful and devoted, if illicit love. He never saw Madame de Balbi again ; but the following letter some time afterwards to the Comtesse de Provence, who had complained that Madame de Balbi had not written to her when she should have done so, shows how bitterly he felt the defection of the woman he loved :—

“VERONA, 16th August, 1795.

“What you tell me has given you trouble, obliges me to inform you of something that happened some time ago, but you are too well acquainted with the laws of friendship not to consider that they imposed silence upon me. Madame de Balbi owed you, no doubt, a mark of respect on this occasion, but I am no longer in a position to offer her advice.

“Friendship ought not to be alarmed at errors caused by love, but when these errors cause so great an exposure that honour is wounded, honour demands that even friendship shall be sacrificed.

“This is the case I had to do with last autumn. The terrible scandal of a ‘liaison’ with a man who was unfortunately most immoral, and the still more scandalous results of this connection, forced me to make a most painful sacrifice to my honour, that of a friendship which has made me happy for thirteen years. You will easily understand that I am not anxious to speak of it even to you. But the confidence you have

¹ Reiset, *La Comtesse de Balbi*, p. 295.

made me requires from me what I make to you to-day. If I had known earlier, that is to say before last October, that Madame de Balbi had never written to you since her departure from Turin, I would have reproved her. Now, I have neither the wish nor the right to advise her.”¹

Before this letter was written, an important event had taken place, though for many years it seemed destined to make little difference to Monsieur's fortunes. On June 8, 1795, Louis XVII died in the Temple, and on the 24th of the same month the Regent proclaimed himself King of France under the title of Louis XVIII, and at once issued a proclamation to his subjects. It was couched in gentler terms than the one written directly after Louis XVI's death, for it promised reform of abuses, and pardon to every one except the regicides; but it breathed no word of abolition of the Ancien Régime.

Lord Macartney, who was at this time at Verona, and had many interviews with Louis XVIII, gives an interesting account of the King's opinions. He says: “With regard to the French Constitution, it is regarded, particularly by the King, with the same fondness as the Common Law was contemplated by my Lord Coke, as the wisdom of ages, the perfection of reason, etc., and as the only kind of government suitable to the French nation. At the same time he admits that many serious abuses had crept into it, of which he is determined to purge it, if he should be restored, for none of the abuses does he look upon as making any integral part of the real Constitution itself, which in his opinion is as little despotic as our

¹ See Reiset's *Madame de Balbi*, p. 308.

own." Later in his letter, Macartney says: "The King is a man of good understanding, and of extensive information. In all his discourses he professes the utmost moderation and integrity, and those who have had opportunities of knowing him best seem persuaded of his sincerity.

"I cannot pretend to have sufficient experience of him to judge myself of his real character. But I have never observed in him any fluctuation of opinion with regard to what has already past, or what he thinks ought to be done. He speaks of the principal persons concerned in the Revolution without any appearance of rancour, and of the Revolution itself with a degree of calmness and dispassion that one would hardly expect."¹

Russia and Spain had acknowledged the Comte de Provence's accession to the title of King of France. He now possessed a Council; and had just summoned Saint-Priest, Louis XVI's old Minister, to his side; otherwise there was no apparent difference between the different grades of Comte de Provence, Regent, and King without a kingdom. Possibly Macartney's arguments may have had some effect on Louis XVIII's mind, as we hear that in the Council the question was agitated of compounding with the Constitution of 1791, which had been signed by Louis XVI; but that the ultra-Royalists rejected the idea with loathing, and as usual carried their point. Otherwise, matters were much in the same condition as before, except that the English expedition under Puisaye to La Vendée had failed miserably, and the only bright spot on the horizon was the fact that Louis XVI's daughter, the

¹ Lord Macartney to Mr. Wickham, October 15, 1795, *Wickham Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 181.

only survivor of her unfortunate family, had been released from the Temple and handed over to the Austrians by the Directory, who had just replaced the Convention as rulers of France.

Louis XVIII had long been impatient of his forced sojourn at Verona, and had longed for an asylum in Spain, which, however, had been continually refused by the Spanish Government. Now, however, afraid that his state of inaction would be contrasted disadvantageously with his brother's activity—which, though not very useful was at any rate showy—he was most anxious to join Condé's army, not, as he explained, as King, but as the Comte de l'Isle, a simple gentleman, who had come to fight under the white flag. Austria was, however, obdurate in her objection to this plan, and her fear of France was well founded, for nearly all the European Powers had recognised the Republic, and her armies were everywhere triumphant.

It soon became absolutely necessary for Louis XVIII to leave Verona, for on April 14, 1794, the Venetian Republic, at the order of the Directory, who were furious because the Russian Ambassador had been accredited to Louis XVIII and not to the representative of the French Republic, informed the King that they could no longer allow him to remain in Verona. Louis XVIII's answer may be given in the words of d'Avaray :

“ My Master answered, ‘ I will go ’ ; but I require two conditions—the first that I am given the golden book in which the name of my family is inscribed, so that I may cross it out with my own hand ; the second that the armour which my ancestor Henri IV gave in friendship to the Republic is returned to me.”

These words were doubtless intended to touch the

Venetian Republic to the quick, but unfortunately Louis XVIII was always destined to find during his wanderings, that when a country was threatened by victorious France, fantastic ideas of honour weighed lightly in the balance against patriotism and self-preservation. Eventually he departed with a certain lack of dignity, as, in order to hide his flight from his creditors, and also from the representative of the French Republic at Verona, he and d'Avaray left Verona secretly and travelled by the St. Gothard Pass, while Vauguyon, who resembled his Royal Master, played his part for the occasion, and went by the usual route.

Against the advice of the English agents, and without consulting Austria, Louis XVIII had determined to make his way to Condé's army ; and after eight days of painful mule travelling he arrived at Riegel, the Prince's headquarters, and next day harangued the troops, telling them that his presence would help to end the misfortunes of France by " showing the deluded subjects still armed against us, the difference of their fate under the tyrants who oppress them to that enjoyed by children surrounding a good father." Louis XVIII was, of course, the " good father " ; but in spite of the fact that he rode among the regiments, visited their outposts along the Rhine, and even tried to persuade the " deluded subjects " at the other side of the river to join his cause, the Republican soldiers did not appear inclined to recognise the force of his arguments. Perhaps it occurred to them that the paternal relation did not always involve payment of troops. However, though nothing decisive happened, it was at least satisfactory that they crowded to see him, and seemed touched by what he said to them.

It is sad to think that even among the Émigré army Louis XVIII did not excite enthusiasm, being considered, as at Coblenz, "not pure" in his politics; while his warlike pretensions and persevering efforts to assume a soldierly character, in conjunction with his absolute unfitness for the martial calling, excited ridicule in the gay, gallant, feather-brained gentlemen of the Ancien Régime.

Others judged him more favourably, for several Councils were held at Riegel, to which the King invited the English envoys, Mr. Wickham and Colonel Craufurd; and they were struck by Louis XVIII's superiority to the men who surrounded him, and wished some capable person could be with him to advise him. The subject discussed at one of the Councils was the question of what should be said to Austria, who had strongly objected to Louis XVIII's presence with Condé's army; and the Englishmen feared that the answer contemplated by the King would cause an open rupture between him and the Emperor Francis. He (the King), says Wickham, "was prevented from yielding to our remonstrances by the warmth and childish petulance of the Count d'Avaray, who, with not half the talents, learning, or good sense of the King, has the most absolute dominion over his mind."¹

Eventually, the English envoys succeeded in carrying their point; but in spite of this, the Austrians threatened to use force unless the Comte de l'Isle would consent to leave Condé's army at once. The unfortunate King's situation was therefore most forlorn; for no resting place seemed open to him, and he started to wander aimlessly he knew not whither. By chance

¹ Wickham's *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 364.

he came again into contact with the military operations ; this time Condé, as well as the Austrian army, being in full retreat before the Republican General Moreau. Louis XVIII stayed with the army for a few days, and then issued a farewell proclamation to the troops, as there was little use in accompanying the Emigré army in its forced march into Germany.

However, he lingered a few days at the little town of Dillingen, where his troubles, as well as his hopes, were almost ended for ever. Tired with the heat, he was standing one evening with the Duc de Fleury and the Duc de Guiche at the open window of his inn, when some one fired at him from the street, and the ball struck the top of his head and lodged in the wall behind. At the cries of the two gentlemen, d'Avaray, who had just left his master, returned to find him covered with blood, and his two attendants in the greatest anguish, fearing he was mortally wounded. The King, however, treated the incident with the utmost coolness. "If the shot had been aimed a little lower," he said to those around him directly after the accident, "the name of the King would have been Charles X." He was laid up for some time from the effects of his wound, and as soon as he recovered, he left the army by night to avoid disturbance in the camp ; but the Emigrés, whose motto was "no compromise," and in whose impracticable minds political and prudential considerations weighed for nothing, were very angry at his departure, feeling ashamed that he should yield to Austrian orders.¹

Brunswick was the only State which would now receive the Comte de l'Isle, and at Blanckenburg in that State he and his suite were lodged in three rooms at

¹ *Souvenirs du Comte de la Ferronnays*, p. 42.

the house of a brewer's widow, and he received his guests "in a spare blue coat, with waistcoat and breeches of worn black, but with an affable air."¹

In Blanckenburg for eighteen months Louis XVIII lived in discomfort. He worked hard, writing continually to his agents in Paris, and setting on foot fresh intrigues with the object of rousing Royalist feeling in France. Sometimes he was served by faithful and active adherents, but, on the other hand, he often found himself exploited by worthless adventurers, who deceived him by pretended advances on the part of prominent Republicans; Barras, Hoche, Moreau, and later Napoleon himself, each exciting his hopes on various occasions.

At Blanckenburg Saint-Priest visited the King, and assumed what was virtually the position of First Minister. There he heard of the death of Catherine II, the faithful friend of the Émigrés; there he received news of the arrest of the members of the Royalist agency in Paris, and of the seizure of their papers, and with the help of Saint-Priest reconstructed the agency. There, too, after his hopes had been raised by the greater moderation of feeling in France, and by the fact that in 1797 two hundred Royalists were returned in the elections for the legislature, a crushing blow was dealt to him by the Coup d'État of Fructidor 18—in non-Revolutionary parlance, September 4th, 1797—when the Revolutionary Government rose against the moderates, and exiled them for life to the unhealthy swamps of Cayenne.

The Republic was again firmly established as the Government of France, and to all eyes but those of the patient, ever-buoyant exile at Blanckenburg,

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. i. p. 376.

matters seemed hopeless for the Bourbon Family. However, Louis XVIII never despaired, for he believed firmly in a destiny which must eventually replace him on the throne of his fathers ; therefore, whatever catastrophe might befall him, his fortitude was unshaken, and his serenity undisturbed.

CHAPTER VIII

Liberation of Madame Royale—Letters between her and Louis XVIII—His scheme to marry her to the Duc d'Angoulême—Austrian opposition—Madame Royale's firmness—Her character—That of the Duc d'Angoulême—Louis XVIII's alarm at his liberal views—Louis XVIII obliged to leave Blanckenburg.

AMONG the many projects which occupied Louis XVIII's thoughts both at Verona and at Blanckenburg, one seemed to him of supreme importance, both from a political point of view, and also because it would satisfy the dictates of natural affection by uniting the Bourbon Family very closely together.

It was with the utmost joy that the King had heard during his stay at Verona of the approaching liberation of the seventeen-year-old Madame Royale, and he managed at once to convey a letter for her to Madame de Tourzel, who was allowed to visit her in the Temple.

"I hazard this letter, my dear niece," he said, "without knowing whether it will reach you ; but my tenderness for you will not long allow me to be silent in such a cruel time. Nothing can make up to you for the terrible losses you have sustained ; but allow me to try to soften the bitterness of them. Consider me, I beg you, as your father, and be quite sure that I love you, and shall love you as tenderly as though you were my own daughter. If those who manage to convey this letter to you can give you at the same time the means of replying to it with safety, I shall be

enraptured to learn that your heart accepts the offers of mine. But, in the name of God, no imprudence, and remember that your safety is preferable to my satisfaction. Good-bye, dear niece ; I love and embrace you with all my heart.”¹

In spite of the closeness with which she was watched, Madame Royale managed to answer her uncle’s letter.

“MY DEAR UNCLE,” she wrote :

“NO one can be more touched than I am by the feelings you deign to show an unfortunate orphan, in wishing to adopt her as your daughter. The first moment of joy which I have tasted for three years, is that in which you tell me of your kindly feelings. I love you, as ever, very much, and hope some day to express to you myself my gratitude and friendship for you. I am very anxious about your health, and to know what you have become during the three years during which I have not had the happiness of seeing you. I hope that you are well. I pray Heaven for that every day, as well as to prolong your days, so that you may be happy, which perhaps will not happen for a long time. Good-bye. I beg you to feel certain that, whatever happens, till my last breath I shall love you.

“MARIE THÉRÈSE CHARLOTTE.”²

This was a delightful letter to receive, but in spite of his joy at his niece’s freedom, the knowledge that it had been granted at the request of the Emperor Francis, and that Louis XVI’s daughter was now in the hands of her mother’s relations, filled the King with apprehensions. Austria and France had always been

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l’Émigration*, vol. ii. p. 130.

² *Ibid.*

enemies, one of the most telling epithets used against the unfortunate Marie Antoinette being that of "l'Autrichienne," because it identified her with the country hated by the French with a deadly hatred ; while to Louis XVIII the feeling of hostility was intensified by the fact that the Austrians had always disliked and feared the Émigrés, and had belittled and circumvented them at every turn. It would be a terrible catastrophe if Madame Royale should, in anger at the cruel treatment she had received, desert the country of her birth and adopt her mother's native place as her own ; besides, Louis XVIII suspected that there might be a design in the Emperor's mind to marry her to his second brother, the Archduke Charles. Possibly Austrian ambition soared yet higher, and the Emperor saw in a beatific vision the throne of France jointly occupied by his brother and Louis XVI's daughter. The fancy was maddening, and except for the power of the pen, Louis XVIII was utterly helpless to combat the schemes of his enemy.

One day, however, in a talk with d'Avaray, the idea of a possible marriage between Madame Royale and the Duc d'Angoulême, eldest son of the Comte d'Artois, was mooted. The notion took a firm hold of Louis XVIII's mind. It seemed to him from all points of view supremely desirable ; but the matter required the utmost care and diplomacy, for the Princess was now almost a stranger to her uncle, and in Austria she would be completely exposed to the influence of her mother's relations.

Therefore, on her departure from France, the King sent Condé and d'Avaray to meet her at Bâle, bearing with them a most affectionate letter, in which he again offered her his fatherly love, while enjoining her to

remember the gratitude she owed to her cousin the Emperor, who had managed to bring about her liberty. At the same time he despatched a letter to Madame de Tourzel, who was, he thought, to accompany Madame Royale to Austria, and in this he showed his real feelings. He said :

“ It is very difficult for me to believe in the thorough disinterestedness of the Austrian Court, and I cannot help, under its apparent generosity, suspecting long-sighted calculations, and an intention to make me some day pay dearly for my niece’s liberty. Besides, after all she has suffered in France, it will not be difficult to inspire her with an insurmountable dislike for a country which is, and which I hope above all things will be, always hers. It is only too probable that this is what will happen to her in Vienna.”¹

A few days later, after consulting again with d’Avaray, he decided to confide even more thoroughly in Madame de Tourzel, and added the following paragraph to his letter :

“ It is you on whom I depend to foil any projects the Court of Vienna may entertain, by continually reminding my niece that without forgetting the gratitude she owes to the Emperor, she must always remember that she is French, that she is of my blood, that she has no other father but me, that she ought to share, like the rest of my family, my fate, whether it be happy or unhappy, and, above all things, that she must not contract ties, or even make promises except by my wishes and under my authority. I will tell you more ; I have thought about her happiness, about that of all my family, about mine, and I can find no surer means of attaining these different ends, than by marrying her to

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l’Émigration*, vol. ii. p. 135.

the Duc d'Angoulême, my nephew. I know for certain that the King and Queen, when they had no other child but her, were anxious for this marriage. Certainly, when they had boys, my nephew ceased to be a suitable 'parti' for her, and they changed their mind. But I am quite sure that if they were alive and had lost their sons, they would return to their original intention. So I am only following it."

Thus spoke the King with Royal dignity, and asserted the authority he wielded as head of the family. Unfortunately, however, these letters were useless, for Madame de Tourzel was not allowed to accompany Madame Royale to Vienna, a Madame de Soucy being appointed in her place by the Directory, and the Princess was in consequence never informed of her Uncle's plans for her future. However, Louis XVIII wrote also to the Emperor begging for the charge of Madame Royale, and if his request were granted he announced the intention of sending her to Rome, where she would be confided to the care of her great-aunts, Madame Adelaïde and Madame Victoire.

This request was refused ; and Louis XVIII became more and more anxious, and convinced that the Austrian Court were nourishing some deeply laid plot to their own advantage. The substitution—unknown to him—of Madame de Soucy for Madame de Tourzel had indirectly the effect of causing him fresh apprehensions ; for when the Princess, of course realising nothing of the matrimonial designs for her which the King had expressed in the letter addressed to Madame de Tourzel, wrote to him on her journey declaring her affection and submission to his behests, but mentioning nothing about the matter which was the dearest wish of his heart, he was both puzzled and

alarmed. "I see quite well," he says in his answer to this unsatisfactory communication, "that your modesty, a praiseworthy quality, prevents your explaining yourself on a very interesting subject," and he went on to beg the Princess to write something which would show the Duc d'Angoulême that she was willing to accept him as her husband.

Madame Royale, not knowing of her Uncle's matrimonial designs for her, must have been almost as disconcerted by his letter as he had been by hers, and the position of this girl of seventeen, lately liberated from a prison in which she had heard nothing of the outside world, to find herself considered a person of the highest importance, and surrounded by intrigues, was a strange and critical one. However, she at last understood the King's wishes, and was equal to the occasion. She took three days for consideration, and then she wrote her Uncle a long letter.

"Sire," she said, "I am about to arrive at Vienna, where I shall await your Majesty's orders. But I warn you that however much I may wish to hear from you, I am afraid I shall not be able to write often because I shall certainly be under close observation. Already on my journey I have been prevented from meeting French people, the Emperor wishing to see me first, and fearing that I should learn his projects. I have known them for a long time, and I declare positively to my Uncle that I shall always remain faithfully attached to him, as well as to my father's and mother's wishes about my marriage, and that I shall reject all the Emperor's propositions on behalf of his brother. I will not submit to them. My parents' wish is contrary to them, and I intend in

everything to obey my Uncle's orders. I should like very much to be with you at Verona ; but I will do all I can to let you know what the Emperor may say to me.

“Uncle, you have known me for a long time ; but I hope that you will never doubt me. My position is very difficult and delicate ; but I have confidence in the God who has hitherto given me succour, and brought me through so many perils. He will enable me never to belie the illustrious blood which flows in my veins. I should prefer unhappiness with my relations while they are unhappy, to remaining at the Court of a Prince who is hostile to my family and country.”¹

This letter was naturally received with joy by the King and d'Avaray, who were ashamed, as the King said in his answer to his niece, of ever having doubted her ; and the King at once set to work to obtain a dispensation for the marriage of the cousins. In writing about this to the Chevalier d'Azara at Rome, Louis XVIII thus expresses his reasons for objecting to the marriage of Madame Royale with the Archduke Charles.

“In the first place, a little pride perhaps, which you will, however, think well-founded, makes me consider the Emperor's second brother, a Prince without a kingdom, without the hope of having one, as his two elder brothers have children, not a suitable match for the only daughter of the late King, my brother.

“Secondly, I will not give my consent to a marriage which would without doubt be considered in France as a means and a first step to the dismemberment of my kingdom, a thing to which my subjects, whether

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. ii. p. 148.

loyal or disloyal, feel a repugnance as natural as invincible.

“Thirdly, the long misfortunes undergone by my niece, her courage, and virtues, have invested her with an interest, and have dowered her with a love on the part of the French, of which it is most essential for me to take advantage, and to appropriate by marrying her to my successor.”

This is plain speaking ; and we see that whereas affection for his niece and a desire to unite the family were integers in Louis XVIII's scheme, the political aspect of the situation was, as usual, always in the forefront of his thoughts, and that every other motive was subordinated to his desire to return to France as King.

Many agitations were still to be gone through before Madame Royale became the Duchesse d'Angoulême. At first there seemed a disposition at Vienna to keep her almost in the position of a political prisoner, and to allow her to see none of her countrymen. The King was so indignant at the idea of this, and expressed himself so strongly on the subject, that his niece was obliged to write to try to calm him, for, as the Emperor invariably refused to answer his letters, she was the only channel of communication between the two men. Her alarms at the way in which she was likely to be treated in Vienna, alarms only too natural when we remember what her life in the Temple had been, had now subsided, and she seems to have been very happy with her Austrian cousins. Masters were provided to supplement her neglected education, and she spent her time with the young Archduchesses. “In the name of Heaven,” she writes to her Uncle, “I beg you to calm yourself, and to be quite per-

sueded that I am not a captive ; if I were I should say so at once, and should not be happy for a moment ; but it is not true.”

Madame Royale wrote with the decision which always characterised her, but Louis XVIII was still anxious. His niece was, in his opinion, becoming Austrianised, for she evidently believed in the Emperor, whom he considered absolutely untrustworthy ; and was contented and even happy among her mother's relations. In truth, her present life must have seemed like Paradise after the cruelty of her imprisonment. “You have no idea of the hardships of our prison,” she writes to her Uncle ; “people who have not seen them with their own eyes cannot imagine them. Even I, who have suffered so much, find it almost difficult to believe in them. My aunt and I did not know of my mother's removal to the Conciergerie, and then of her death. I was only told it in '95. My aunt was seized away from me to be put to death. In vain I asked why we were separated. They shut and locked the door without answering me. My brother died in the room under me, and they left me in ignorance of it.”

It would not have been surprising had Madame Royale's brain been permanently injured by the solitary confinement to which she had been subjected when almost a child, but she came out from prison at the age of seventeen strong, self-contained, and religious ; not pretty, though with good features ; brusque in manner, rough in voice, and absolutely without charm—a woman whose bravery and resignation enabled her to shine in adversity, but who in prosperity showed herself totally wanting in the little graces which invest Royalty with popularity. Besides, when she returned

to France at the Restoration, she was still of the Ancien Régime, and with her father-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, made a formidable opposition to the King's attempts at bringing forward a liberal policy.

That the awful sufferings she had gone through had left an indelible impression on her nerves and had given a strange twist to her character was only to be expected, and Madame de Boigne, writing after the Restoration of Louis XVIII to the throne of France, gives a curious instance of the results of this nervous shock. She says :

“The Comtesse de Châtenay was often taken by her mother, the Comtesse de la Guiche, to see Madame when both of them were children. Madame remembered this, and treated her with kindly familiarity; she received her several times privately. One day she said to her : ‘Your father died young, did he not?’ Yes, Madame. ‘Where did he die?’ Madame de Châtenay hesitated a moment, and then answered, ‘Alas! Madame, he perished on the scaffold during the Terror.’ Madame recoiled as though she had trodden on an asp; a moment later she dismissed Madame de Châtenay. And from that day, not only did she cease her former kindness, but she treated her worse than any one else, and avoided speaking to her whenever she could. I do not attempt to explain the feeling which dictated this conduct, for I cannot imagine what it was. I only tell the story faithfully.”¹

The great ladies of the Restoration evolved a romantic heroine out of the “Orphan of the Temple,” but when they discovered that in spite of her natural dignity she lacked grace of manner, they made few excuses for a Princess who at the most crucial time of

¹ *Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne* (trans.), vol. i. p. 316.

her life, when other children of her rank were receiving careful instruction to fit them for the duties awaiting them, was left to the anguish and terror of complete solitude.

Madame Royale's sufferings had not, at any rate, broken her spirit, for on several occasions she showed the greatest personal bravery. She grew very fond of her Uncle, whose courage, though of a passive nature, equalled her own; but it is curious to see that, even in these early days, she did not hesitate to refuse obedience to his behests when he proposed anything repugnant to her fearless, straightforward nature.

The Abbé Edgeworth de Firmon, Louis XVI's confessor, after lying for long in hiding, had managed to escape from France; and towards the end of the year 1796 he appeared at Blanckenburg, where he was received with much cordiality and delight by the King, who listened with the utmost emotion to the account of his brother's last days, and wrote at once to tell his niece what he had heard from the Abbé. At the same time, with his usual desire to turn everything to political capital, he suggested that she should write a grateful letter to her father's confessor, and date it from the day on which she had gained her liberty. The Princess, however, refused firmly to do this, in spite of the fact that her Uncle wrote twice to her on the subject. The letter, she objected, would be put into the papers, and she disliked publicity. "Besides," she continued—and we cannot help feeling that the lesson she indirectly inculcated might occasionally have been followed with advantage by her Uncle—"I will not hide from you the fact that to antedate my letter would cause me pain. That may be done by older

people, and for business which requires it. But it is natural to my age and to my character to be as simple and exact as truth is."

Perhaps it was Austrian influence which about this time made the Princess suddenly susceptible about her dignity. She complained to the King that her future father-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, had only written to her once in eighteen months, while the Comtesse d'Artois had never written. The great aunts at Naples kept up a regular correspondence with her, as did the Queen of France; but she had received no communications of any sort from the Duc de Berry, her aunt the Queen of Naples, or her Spanish cousins. Unfortunately, too, a mishap to the post delayed a letter from the King telling her that the Duc d'Angoulême had broken his ankle, so that she saw the news first in a newspaper, and was naturally indignant that no one should consider it worth while to inform her of her fiancé's accident.

The King was much distressed at her reproaches, and in spite of the enormous correspondence entailed by the constant repairing of the meshes of the spider's web of intrigue which reached every country in Europe, he wrote continually and affectionately to her from his uncomfortable lodging at Blanckenburg, and tried with the utmost care and tact to make up by paternal tenderness and love, for the shortcomings of the rest of the Royal Family. He also asked the Marquis de Bonnay, who happened to be at Vienna, to see her, and to find out as far as possible what was her state of mind. Bonnay evidently performed his task with the utmost skill, as is shown by his letter detailing the result of his interviews with the Princess, who seemed to have accorded him full confidence.

Bonnay considered that Madame Royale must not be hurried into marriage, because if pressed too far she might disobey ; and disobedience with any one of her character would mean that she would never return to submission, while she would be backed up in her rebellion by the Austrian Court. Therefore gentle methods were the only means likely to be successful. Madame Royale must feel herself loved; Monsieur, who had been very negligent, must write often and affectionately ; and above all things the Princess must be told little details about the Duc d'Angoulême, especially such as would particularly appeal to her peculiar character. She was very devout; the Duc d'Angoulême always fulfilled his religious duties with punctuality, and had himself asked, before he left Edinburgh, to perform his devotions, and had performed them. Why had not this fact been related to her? It would have pleased her. "You know, Monsieur le Comte" [Bonnay was writing to d'Avaray, who was to pass on the letter to the King] "how much can be done with women in general—and why not with Princesses?—by making much of the men one wants them to love," and he went on to urge that every possible effort should be made in this direction with Madame Royale.

It seems well to glance for a moment at the character of the man destined to become the husband of "the Orphan of the Temple." Quiet and shy, cold in temperament and distrustful of himself, his nervousness and reserve cloaked many valuable qualities. It has been said, and possibly correctly, that had Louis XVIII outlived the Comte d'Artois and been followed on the throne by the Duc d'Angoulême, the Bourbons might not have lost the crown of France. For the Duc d'Angoulême was decidedly liberal in his opinions, and

followed in the footsteps of his Uncle, rather than in those of the Comte d'Artois.

The young man had first joined the King permanently at Blanckenburg, after having spent part of his youth with his father and mother at Turin; and then, having held a command in Condé's army, he had also visited his father in Scotland, and had spent some time travelling in England. His had not been a happy childhood, for the neglected and peculiar Comtesse d'Artois troubled little about her sons; the King of Sardinia considered his grandsons a trouble, and was only too glad to get rid of them; while the Comte d'Artois was too much occupied with Madame de Polastron, as well as with political scheming, to have much time to attend to his family. Louis XVIII seems to have been the only person who took any real interest in the young men, and he was tenderly attached to both of them, and at times foolishly indulgent to the weaknesses of the Duc de Berry. The latter was the soldier of the family, and, like his father, a man of many love affairs, which were looked upon with little indulgence when the hero of them, instead of being brother to a powerful monarch, was a homeless, penniless exile.

The Duc d'Angoulême, on the other hand, was morally irreproachable; but the King reproached him affectionately with his indolence in intellectual matters, which was specially unfortunate because the future Duchesse d'Angoulême was evidently possessed of superior mental powers. Louis XVIII was also distressed to discover that his nephew approved of the representative system in politics, so that his convictions showed a dangerous affinity to those held by the "Monarchiens," or Constitutional Royalists, who, as

we know, were even more dreaded by the thorough-going exponents of the Ancien Régime than were the Jacobins.

The King felt that it was urgently incumbent on him to essay the task of converting his nephew to his own admiration of the Constitution of the Ancien Régime when purged of abuses, and he decided that personal teaching would be necessary to show the young man the error of his ways. In a letter to the Comte d'Artois on the subject, he says : "I began by trying to put him at ease, and in order to do this I hid the pain I felt, in finding myself reduced to converting on so essential a point him who after us will wear the crown of Henri IV."

The King then entered on his exposition, and considered that he must certainly quickly succeed in bringing his nephew over to his own convictions. It was, therefore, disconcerting, as proving that the poison of liberalism had bitten deep, that the Duc d'Angoulême, after listening to his uncle's arguments, which were no doubt expressed with much eloquence, still kept to the opinion that when the King should in the future ascend the throne, it would be his duty to consult the people of France as to the Constitution they might prefer. This was most disappointing ; but, with his usual optimism, Louis XVIII refused to despair of eventually compassing his nephew's conversion, little thinking that, in order to preserve his position as King of France, he would be obliged himself to adopt a modified edition of the opinions he now reprobated severely. He had already altered the absolute views expressed in the manifesto he had issued on assuming the title of King ; had contemplated negotiations, if occasion should arise, with the

Revolutionary party ; and had even announced to his agents in Paris that if he were to become King, his brother's assassins, whom he had hitherto threatened with condign punishment, should be allowed to leave the country without confiscation of their property. This was an extraordinary modification of his former declarations.

The King had long been anxious to leave Blanckenburg and to find some asylum where he could receive Madame Royale, and where it would be possible for the marriage between her and the Duc d'Angoulême to take place. He longed, he said, to have his children with him ; and among the bitter disappointments which he underwent when all his plans were ruined by the unexpected consolidation of the Republic in France, the one star of hope which shone on his darkened horizon was the thought of this much-longed-for marriage. In answer to his earnest prayers, the Czar had offered him a home in Westphalia ; but he considered that this was too near Holland for safety. However, the victorious Republican armies seemed to cover Europe, and while the King hesitated, his hand was forced ; for the Directory commanded the King of Prussia to banish the Comte de Provence, and the Émigrés with him, from the Kingdom of Brunswick.

The position in which Louis XVIII now found himself was tragic. He had indeed wished to leave Blanckenburg, but not till he had found another resting-place, and at first none seemed forthcoming. With wise prevision he had, however, applied some time before to Paul I of Russia for an asylum in his kingdom ; for, as his hope that the much-harried Swiss would rise successfully against the Republic seemed

doomed to disappointment, he felt less reluctance to the idea of exile in far-away Russia. It was, therefore, with extreme relief that he heard from Saint-Priest, his envoy at St. Petersburg, that the Czar offered him a refuge in the Château of Mittau in Courland.

CHAPTER IX

Trials of journey from Blanckenburg—Arrival at Mittau—Character of the Czar—Life at Mittau—Louis XVIII's character—Public affairs—King appeals to Bonaparte—The latter's reply—The Revolution of the 18th Brumaire—The Queen's arrival—Disagreeables—Madame Royale's arrival—Her marriage to the Duc d'Angoulême—King's reconciliation to the Duc d'Orléans—Difficulties with the Comte d'Artois—General Fersen's visit—Czar's brutality—The King and the Duchesse d'Angoulême are driven from Russia.

IN spite of the relief the King experienced at the prospect of a safe asylum in Russia, and the pleasure it gave him to feel that here for the first time he would be treated with Royal honours, it was with a sad heart that he prepared to start in bitter weather on his tedious and tiring journey across Europe. Mittau would be exile indeed, and going there seemed a fresh defeat to his cause, for every step of the way carried him further from his beloved country ; and, once surrounded by Russian snows, what tidings could make their way to him ?

His only consolation was that Paul I, influenced by Condé and Panin, and also by the faithful Saint-Priest, seemed disposed to act with much munificence. Having already established the Prince of Condé in a magnificent palace in St. Petersburg and taken his small army into his service, he was prepared to receive Louis XVIII with Royal honours, and to grant him a pension of two hundred thousand roubles. Therefore it would now be possible for the Queen to join her husband, some of



From an engraving by Anker Smith, A.R.A., from a picture given by the Empress of Russia to Sir Horne Popham.

PAUL I,
CZAR OF RUSSIA.

his faithful followers might be summoned, to his side, and if other difficulties could be surmounted, the goal of his hopes might at last be in view, for he would now be able to provide a suitable home for his niece.

Much must be gone through first, and the journey was a terrible undertaking to one as stout, gouty, and prematurely aged as was the unfortunate King. "Nothing is more curious," says one who saw him both at Riegel and at Mittau, "than the contrast between that beautiful Royal head and the thickest, most ungraceful body in the world."¹

The King left Blanckenburg on February 10th, 1798, made his first halt at Kustrin, a small town near Berlin, and arrived at Mittau on March 13th. The intense cold made the journey extremely painful; the inns were for the most part miserable hovels, and the roads often almost impassable. Occasionally a wheel or a spring would break, and once it was necessary for men to carry the carriage; while on another occasion, owing to the flooding of the Niemen, it was impossible to cross by the usual ford, the weight of the heavy, lumbering coach sunk the boats in which it was placed, and eventually the river was only crossed after a long round and a delay of twenty-four hours.

When the King at last arrived at Mittau his condition must have been pitiable, though his spirit was as undaunted as ever.

He was to meet with many misfortunes and humiliations in Russia, for he was putting himself into the power of a despot so uncontrolled in his passions that he was almost insane. "Variable, suspicious, whimsical, violent, the Czar showed himself capable of the most contrary excesses. His generosity was that of a despot,

¹ *Souvenirs du Comte de la Ferronays*, p. 160.

as his fits of passion were those of a madman. Whatever he fancied, it was necessary the fancy should be fulfilled at the very time when it crossed his mind,"¹ says the Comte de la Ferronnays. At present the King was tasting his generosity ; in the future he would suffer bitterly from his inconsiderate cruelty.

At first, the only request made by Louis XVIII which was refused by the Czar, was that of allowing him to pay a visit incognito to St. Petersburg. Otherwise, when the King found on arriving that all the Courland nobility had come out to receive him, and saw the vast and sumptuous ducal Château of Mittau, whose architecture somewhat resembled that of Versailles, he must have felt that for the first time during his wanderings he was lodged like a king.

Other impressions were not so agreeable. Orders had been sent by the Czar to the Military Governor of Mittau, that the French soldiers who had been detached from Condé's army to act as guard to the King, were to be lodged in barracks in the town, and were to submit to Russian military discipline. The King protested at this, wishing his soldiers to be solely under his orders, but Paul I repeated the order, and matters were only modified by the intervention of General Fersen.²

Now began quite a new life for the King. The inhabitants of Courland were intellectual and refined, so that it was possible to find enjoyment in intercourse with them, and he was surrounded by a small Court, which was arranged by d'Avaray on the lines of the most pompous and particular etiquette, with Almoners, a First Minister, in the person of the Comte de Saint-Priest, a Gentleman of the Chamber, a Master of

¹ Ferronnays' *Souvenirs*, p. 160.

² Brother to Marie Antoinette's favourite, Count Fersen.

the Ceremonies, and numerous servants. Later, the households of the Queen and of the Duchesse d'Angoulême added to the expensive paraphernalia considered necessary to keep up the dignity of Royalty, with the result that the King was always in debt, and that pressing requests for money occupied much of his correspondence.

Every day after Mass the King gave audience. The Governor of Courland presented the visitors to the gentleman-in-waiting, who in his turn presented them to the King. Louis XVIII was always affable, and when etiquette was not infringed by the invitation, would ask his guest to dinner, at which repast he presided with his usual grace, and would talk with animation on intellectual and literary subjects, displaying great powers as a linguist, and a wonderful fund of anecdote.

Advancing years, while completely crippling the King's physical powers, which had never been robust, had mellowed and widened his character. The conceit and self-sufficiency which had alienated the courtiers who approached the Comte de Provence at the French Court, had quite disappeared, and those who were introduced to Louis XVIII at Mittau were struck by the benevolent and kindly bearing, as well as the Royal dignity of the man who, prematurely aged by delicate health, sorrow, and disappointment, was old at the age of forty-five. The smile in his eyes, that beaming and radiant expression with which he greeted his friends, is mentioned as particularly attractive by several people who came in contact with him now or later.

He was on most subjects astonishingly open-minded, judged his enemies without harshness or acrimony, and was indulgent, patient, and philosophical about

the faults of others. Now, too, the jesting spirit which seemed like irritating trifling in the fastidious, luxurious Comte de Provence, stood him in good stead, for in the midst of some catastrophe which seemed to portend the complete downfall of his most cherished hopes, he would invigorate himself with a laugh at any incongruous incident which excited his sense of the ridiculous.

Life at Mittau might have been pleasant but for the bitter cold and the fact that it *was* exile—almost, in fact, imprisonment—for it was impossible to leave the Château even for a few days without the permission of the Czar ; and this would certainly have been denied. News from France could only be obtained through Hamburg, and when it came it was ever more and more depressing ; in fact, during the King's sojourn at Mittau so untoward were events, that any hope of a return to his native land seemed to have departed for ever.

At first, indeed, matters seem reassuring, for in 1798 and 1799 the victorious armies of the Republic had so upset the arrangements of Europe that, after many hesitations, what is known as the Second Coalition was formed, and Russia, England, Turkey, Naples, and Piedmont prepared to range themselves in battle array against France. They did, indeed, persist in refusing to announce that their intention was to replace Louis XVIII on the throne of his fathers, but the latter was immovable in his opinion that in order to secure the peace of Europe it was absolutely necessary that a Bourbon should again reign over France ; and felt certain that the Powers, if victorious, would find that no other alternative would solve the problem.

Louis XVIII was meantime working with the utmost energy to bring over French generals and legislators to the Royalist side. He was sanguine about a negotiation which some of his agents pretended to be working with Barras ; the defection of the Generals Dumouriez, Willot, and Pichegru had filled him with hope, as well as given him much occupation in the way of correspondence ; while at the end of the year 1799 he conceived the extraordinary idea of starting negotiations with Napoleon, who was then in Egypt. General Berthier was to be the intermediary between the King and the successful General, and it was hoped that Napoleon's wife Josephine, who was supposed to have leanings towards the Royalist side, would use her influence with her husband. The King opened the affair by writing a letter to Bonaparte, in which he began by expressing his admiration for the General's military talents, and went on : "General, you have only one choice to make ; you must play the part of Cæsar or of Monk. I know that the destiny of the first would not alarm you. But search your own heart, and you will find that the brilliance of his victories is dimmed by his usurpation, while the reputation of the second is without stain, and can only be dwarfed by the one which awaits you. Say one word, and the same Royalists whom you perhaps are going to fight will become your soldiers. Give back to me the Army which has always been victorious under your orders, and which, led by a chief like you, will in the future fight only for the good of the kingdom. I do not speak to you of your King's gratitude ; that of all future generations will be assured to you. To finish, if I were addressing any one but Bonaparte, I should offer, I should specify rewards ; a great man

must himself fix his fate and that of his friends ; say what you want for yourself, for them, and the moment of my Restoration will be that when your desires shall be fulfilled.”¹

This letter is interesting, as showing the King's idea of the arguments likely to appeal to Napoleon. Eventually, however, a shorter one was substituted for it, which was answered thus several months later.

“ I have received, Sir, your letter. I thank you for the polite things you say in it about me. It is of no use for you to hope any longer for a return to France. You would have to walk over a hundred thousand corpses. Sacrifice your own interests to the repose and happiness of France. History will remember you for this. I am not without sympathy for the misfortunes of your family. I shall contribute with pleasure to the happiness and tranquillity of your retreat.

“ BONAPARTE.”²

This insulting letter was dated 20th Fructidor of the year VIII ; in other parlance, August 7th, 1800. Napoleon had, however, answered Louis XVIII's letter in a practical manner some months earlier, when, on November 9th and 10th, 1799, he had seized the supreme power by what is known as the Revolution of the 18th Brumaire, and thus had imposed on the King fifteen more years of exile. The beating back of the Allies, the drawing up of the Code Napoléon; and the arrangement with the Pope known as the Concordat, followed each other in quick succession ; and in the excitement of fresh conquests France tolerated the

¹ Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. ii, p. 371.

² *Ibid.*, p. 436.

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military despotism to which she was subjected, while, as far as the majority of his countrymen were concerned, the "King of Mittau" was completely forgotten.

Meanwhile, as soon as Louis XVIII arrived in Russia, he started negotiations to bring about as quickly as possible the marriage between Madame Royale and the Duc d'Angoulême. The Czar helped him with a generous present of money, the Austrian Court put no obstacles in the way of the departure of the Princess, and on September 11th, 1798, the King was able to write joyfully to the Queen, the Comte and Comtesse d'Artois, his aunts in Rome, his sister the Queen of Sardinia, the King and Queen of Spain, the Prince of Condé, the Duc de Berry, the Pope, and his agents in Paris, to announce the joyful news that, thanks to the friendship of the Czar and the goodwill of the Emperor Francis, the obstacles which stood in the way of Madame Royale becoming the Duchesse d'Angoulême, were removed.

The date of the marriage was not yet fixed, and it was necessary to postpone it for a time, as Madame Royale objected to a journey to Russia in the middle of winter, but the King found much occupation in forming the household of the future Duchesse d'Angoulême. On this subject he had many discussions with the Comte d'Artois, who was not in his opinion sufficiently particular as to the moral character, as well as the popularity in France, of the ladies with whom he proposed to surround his daughter-in-law. Other more painful discussions were in store for the King, for the Queen, from whom he had long been parted, was now to leave Budweiss, and to take up her abode at Mittau. Though the Royal couple had

always corresponded affectionately, a certain estrangement had been caused between them by the King's friendship with Madame de Balbi, and now that it was at last possible for him to have his wife to live with him, he must have looked forward with a certain amount of misgiving to her arrival.

In the Queen's youth her attractions had not been great, and now she was an ugly little woman, whose ailments—partly real and partly imaginary—occupied her thoughts almost exclusively, whose caprices, fancies, and sudden impulses made her a difficult person to live with, who wore extraordinary and very often dirty costumes, and was more than suspected of an inclination to intemperance. On one point the King was determined to exercise his marital authority with decision. The Queen was completely under the influence of Madame de Gourbillon, who, according to the King, extorted jewels and large sums of money from her, and wore her clothes ; in fact, was on terms with her which were not at all suitable in her Majesty's present position as Queen. Therefore he was determined that Madame de Gourbillon should not accompany her mistress to Mittau ; and, after having had to insist on a reduction of the sumptuous equipage which was to accompany his spouse on her journey, he wrote :

“ If my prayers and my friendship have no effect on you, if you can decide to compromise me with the Emperor of Russia, who, from your resistance, will have a most strange idea of us both, Madame de Gourbillon can come to Mittau. But I swear to you, for my part, that she shall not set foot in the Château, and that I will not answer for what the Emperor may decide about her.”¹

¹ *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. ii. p. 360.



From an engraving.

MARIE JOSEPHINE LOUISE DE SAVOIE,
(QUEEN OF FRANCE), COMTESSE DE PROVENCE.



The Queen, however, was equally determined ; or possibly was forced to obey Madame de Gourbillon's behests. At any rate, she wrote to the Czar begging that the King might be obliged to receive her companion, which request the Czar did not answer, but sent on to the King, who, on his side, obtained an order from his Royal host that Madame de Gourbillon should not be allowed to enter Mittau, but should be imprisoned in some town on the frontier.

Therefore, when on the evening of June 2nd, 1799, the procession of the Queen's carriages passed through the town on its way to the Château, the carriage containing Madame de Gourbillon was separated from the rest and driven to the Governor's house, where the Governor told her that she was to be conducted to the frontier. Standing at the top of the steps leading to the hall door, with an interested crowd about her, she abused Louis XVIII in the most violent terms. Meanwhile, the Queen had arrived at the Château, and finding her companion was not with her, she threw herself into a state of violent excitement and wept bitterly, refusing to go to her apartment, and crying that she would rather leave Mittau than be separated from her faithful friend. Louis XVIII, horrified at this distressing and unbecoming scene, was obliged to assert his authority, and declare that he would not allow her to leave Mittau ; and at last she consented to go into her own rooms and take off her travelling garments.

The Queen's arrival was certainly a most unpleasant—even a scandalous—affair. However, the next day all disagreements were forgotten in the long-desired arrival of Madame Royale. Everything had been prepared for her with the greatest care. The suite of

rooms destined for her use faced south, and that her future husband occupied looked north ; but hearing that she did not like a south aspect, the King at once offered to change the rooms, and declared that although the southern set of rooms were prettier, and the Duc d'Angoulême also feared the heat, he was sure that the latter would be most willing to make this small sacrifice for Madame Royale's sake.

Madame Royale, however, with much good sense—for a northern aspect in Russia does not sound attractive—said she would much prefer the suite of rooms already arranged for her, and the King's mind was set at rest on this point. He was, however, occupied with many plans for her pleasure and comfort. He had left a collection of diamonds at Coblenz with his uncle, the Elector of Trèves, and he sent her the receipt that she might be able to obtain them. He was most anxious, too, to know about her tastes, and had already provided materials for drawing, while, if she cared for reading, he assured her that she would find plenty of books at Mittau. On the other hand, he was evidently rather relieved that she resembled him in indifference for music, and remarked that a piano would, under the circumstances, be a useless piece of furniture.

The third of June, 1799, was probably the happiest day the King had passed since he left France. Refreshed with her night's rest, the Queen had allowed herself to be coaxed into propriety of behaviour, and was after all glad to be again with her husband, especially on so important an occasion as the arrival of Madame Royale. Accompanied by the Duc d'Angoulême, the King and Queen drove to the outskirts of Mittau to meet their niece, who left her

carriage as soon as she saw them. The King also descended from his as quickly as his size and crippled limbs would permit, and Madame Royale at once threw herself at his feet. He embraced her most affectionately, as did the Queen. Next came the turn of the Duc d'Angoulême, who was so shy and embarrassed that, after having kissed his cousin's hand, he could only manage to stammer a few unintelligible words.

The King, on the other hand, was radiant with joy, and when the party arrived at the Château of Mittau, his voice could be heard calling out :

“Here she is! Here she is!” while every one rushed out to gaze on “the Orphan of the Temple.” It was a moment of triumph, the realisation of a hope, which at times—in spite of his courage and serenity—must have seemed well-nigh unattainable. Something of his contriving had at last succeeded. While all his other carefully prepared schemes had fallen about his ears like shaken card castles, the edifice of the Bourbon marriage remained intact, a memorial to his diplomatic tact and determination.

The marriage was celebrated in the Chapel of Mittau on June 10th, 1799, and it was remarked that the bride showed intense emotion when the names of her unfortunate parents were read in the contract.

During the tragic year 1800, when misfortune after misfortune accumulated on Louis XVIII's head, and no nation in Europe seemed strong enough to cope with the ever-victorious arms of the French First Consul, when the Queen, in anger at her separation from Madame de Gourbillon, refused for days to speak to him or to d'Avaray, when even to his sanguine mind the hope of returning to far-off France must have

seemed chimerical, and when among many other more pressing troubles, the recollection of the defection of the woman who had pretended to love him must occasionally have stabbed him, the presence of his "Angel of Consolation," the brave girl whose courage had never failed in trials which were even greater than his own, may well seem to have been almost the only ray of comfort vouchsafed him in a harsh, unfriendly world.

The reconciliation between the elder branch of the Bourbon Family and the young Duc d'Orléans, afterwards Louis Philippe, who had been compromised by the disloyalty of his infamous father, Philippe Égalité, during the Revolution, but who now offered his submission to Louis XVIII, was indeed cheering ; but, on the other hand, the King was much worried at this time by the refusal of the Comte d'Artois, who was at present at Edinburgh, to acknowledge his authority or to submit to his decrees.

As Comte de Provence and Comte d'Artois, the two brothers had been more or less on the same footing ; but now that the elder one had assumed the title of King, he resented the fact that the Comte d'Artois was inclined to take an independent line, and to treat his orders with the same disregard that the two brothers combined had shown to the injunctions of the unfortunate Louis XVI. A like feeling existed in both cases, for the Comte d'Artois was most anxious to serve his brother's cause, but considered that, Louis XVIII's abode being in far-off Russia, it was often necessary to act without waiting to hear from him. Besides, it must be allowed that the Comte d'Artois loved to come to the front, and to play his own hand in a lighthearted, incautious fashion.

One domestic worry ceased before Louis XVIII left Russia, for the Queen, whose feeble health could not stand the inclement climate, and who had been sent two or three times to health resorts, left Mittau in 1800 for a longer time than usual, her doctors considering it advisable that she should not make the journey to Russia between two seasons of her cure.

As matters turned out, it was several years before she returned to Mittau; for, on January 14, 1801, General Fersen appeared at the Château with tears in his eyes, and in the utmost agitation; and told d'Avaray that he was the bearer of a letter from the Czar to the King, saying that he would continue to pay his pension, but advised him to follow the Queen to Germany. Fersen's emotion became more and more evident as he continued his story, and as he listened d'Avaray grew even more indignant, so that they were both much excited when they went to tell the King what had happened.

For some time Paul I had begun to tire of his troublesome guests. He had conceived a great admiration for Napoleon, and he was disgusted with the Allies, partly because England refused to give up Malta to the Knights of the Order of St. John, of whom he was Grand Master, and partly because the Coalition was unsuccessful against the ever-victorious First Consul of France. Besides, a clever adventuress, who called herself the Comtesse de Bonneuil, and who wished to punish Louis XVIII for refusing to make use of her proffered services, was intriguing to injure the Bourbon cause in St. Petersburg; and in league with La Bonneuil was Madame de Gourbillon, the King's most bitter enemy.

Intrigues, enthusiasms, and political resentments had done their work ; and the capricious despot had withdrawn from the Coalition, refused to assist Dumouriez, who had come over to St. Petersburg prepared to fight for the Royalist cause, and suddenly, and without any apparent reason, ordered Louis XVIII's Ambassador, Caraman, to leave St. Petersburg.

Louis XVIII had written a humble letter to the Czar, asking to be told how his Ambassador had offended, and the answer to this was now brought by Fersen. It was not written by Paul, but by his Minister, Rostopchine, and it ran as follows : "The Emperor orders me to answer, as he does not wish himself to say disagreeable things to the King. His Majesty ought not to intervene in favour of Monsieur de Caraman, who is an intriguer, and has given the Emperor just cause for displeasure. The Emperor intends to be master in his own land. He is sorry to remind the King that hospitality is a kindness, not a duty."¹

The King managed to control his indignation ; and Fersen translated to him the second letter he had brought, which must, he said, be answered within two hours. It was written in German, and it ordered the King to follow the Queen to Kiel without delay. Unfortunately the Queen was not at Kiel, but was established in merely temporary fashion at a health resort ; and the unfortunate King cried in despair : "There is not in the whole world a corner where I can rest my head !"

Left together, the King and d'Avaray consulted about the best course to take ; and after an interview with the Duchess d'Angoulême, in which she showed

¹ Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. iii. p. 204.

her usual courage, as well as her tenderness for her Uncle, the King wrote to the Czar as follows :

“Sire, my brother and cousin. The infantry General Baron de Fersen has performed the commission to me entrusted to him by your Imperial Majesty. Your Imperial Majesty has not been correctly informed as concerns the Queen, my wife. Obligated again this year to take the waters of Pyrmont, and unable to remain in a place which is not habitable in the winter, her health, besides, not allowing her to make such a journey twice in so short a time, she has sought and found with much trouble, a place where she can wait for the season to take the waters, which cannot, in any case, either for me or for her, be a settled place of abode ; if it had been otherwise I would have informed your Imperial Majesty of the fact. I will make my preparations, and the passports sent by your Imperial Majesty will find me ready to start, without knowing where to repose my head ; which would not matter so much for me, but the case is the same for my niece.”

The position of affairs was heartrending ; for the last pension owing to the King had not been paid, and till the arrival of some money he had raised by loan at Riga, he was penniless.

The next communication from the Czar consisted of the King's letter returned unopened, the necessary passports, and orders to leave Mittau without delay. When Fersen was obliged to be the bearer of this brutal message, which might possibly be the King's death-warrant—a journey through Russia in the depths of winter being a terrible undertaking for an invalid—he broke down altogether. The King for a time preserved his equanimity, and then, as Fersen

stood before him, he suddenly began to weep. Even *his* serenity and courage deserted him, as he remembered that this was the day before the anniversary of his brother's death, and that he, a miserable homeless wanderer, was being hunted with the utmost contumely out of his only available refuge; while in France the Corsican usurper was firmly fixed in a position of supremacy.

Fersen, with considerable courage considering that Paul I had established a reign of terror throughout the kingdom, took the responsibility of promising the King that the departure from Mittau should be put off for a day, that the Duchesse d'Angoulême might not be disturbed on the anniversary of her father's death; and the King went at once to visit his niece, whom he found kneeling before the Abbé Edgeworth. She received her Uncle's melancholy news with the utmost courage, and did her best to offer consolation, saying she would always be happy if she could be near him.

The next day, fear of the capricious despot who governed Russia did not prevent a crowd of people coming to the Château to express their sorrow at the departure of the Bourbon Family. Nearly all the nobility of Courland appeared to pay their respects to the French King. But the visitors were not all great and affluent, for the Duchesse d'Angoulême had always been most kind to the poor; and peasants—old men, women, and children—thronged to the Castle, and, pressing forward, tried to kiss the hands of the King and Princess, and to show their sympathy for them.

Meanwhile many and anxious were the consultations at Mittau; for it was difficult to know in which country there was hope of a resting-place. Sweden

and Norway were friendly, but it would be impossible to travel there in the winter; and equally impossible to reach the territory of the King of the Two Sicilies, as the countries it would have been necessary to traverse to arrive in Italy were occupied by French troops. The Viennese Court was unfriendly to the Bourbons, and would be certain to refuse them an asylum; while England was undesirable, as Napoleon had announced her to be France's most dangerous enemy, and it would in consequence hurt French susceptibilities for the King to take refuge there. Spain, on the other hand, was unavailable, because of its relations with France. Therefore, the dominions of the King of Prussia seemed the only place in which to find a refuge, and Caraman, the King's late Ambassador to St. Petersburg, was at once despatched to ask Frederick William of Prussia for leave to reside at Warsaw, while the King awaited the answer at Memel, the first town beyond the Russian frontier.

On January 22nd, the King and the Duchesse d'Angoulême, travelling under the names of the Comte de l'Isle and the Comtesse de Meilleraye, started on their painful and perilous journey. The King had recovered his serenity and power of making the best of everything; the Duchesse d'Angoulême's high spirit and fortitude did not desert her, and never had the Royal fugitives found courage more requisite than now. It was snowing and was bitterly cold, when the two carriages containing d'Avaray, the Duchesse de Serent, the Duc de Fleury, Mademoiselle de Choisy, the Abbé Edgeworth, and three servants, besides the King and the Princess, started across the huge white plains surrounding Mittau. The travellers drove all day, and the first evening they were lodged by a hospitable

gentleman of the country, but the two succeeding nights their only refuge for the night was in a miserable wayside inn. On the fourth day of the journey the hardships and dangers were terrible, for a bitter wind was blowing which raised the snow in whirlwinds, and rendered the road impassable for the heavy carriages, weighed down by their occupants. The only possible means of making any headway was for all the travellers to walk ; and the unfortunate King, supported by his niece and an attendant, had to make his way through the thick snow as best he could, impeded by his crippled condition, and driven back by the driving snow and bitter wind.

CHAPTER X

Arrival at Memel—The King's philosophy—Arrival at Warsaw—Life there—D'Avaray's bad health—First appearance of Blacas—King's anxieties—The Duc de Berry—Napoleon's proposition—Louis XVIII's answer—Napoleon becomes Emperor—Louis XVIII goes to Sweden—Not allowed to return to Warsaw—Second sojourn at Mittau—Returns to Sweden—Goes to England—Difficulties—Gosfield—Hartwell—Death of the Queen—D'Avaray at Madeira—His death.

THE King viewed his summary expulsion from Russia with his usual philosophy, and wrote letters from Memel, in which he praised his niece for her courage and devotion to him, spoke gratefully of the kindness shown to him by General Fersen, the nobility of Courland, and the people generally, and even had a word of gratitude for the tyrant who had expelled him brutally from his kingdom. In a letter to the Queen, to whom he is naturally more confidential than to his other correspondents, he does indeed speak of being "chased from Mittau like a rogue," and complain of the barbarity and insolence of the Governor, who, while pretending to conduct a sale of the furniture, allowed it to be pillaged; but even after describing this and scenes of a like nature, he adds, "These are great infamies. Here is the reverse of them: delicate attentions, tender interest, succour of all kinds in the form of horses, carriages, provisions, money,—this is what we unfortunates have received from the people of Courland; and not from one, from

a few, but from all, from the man who dined constantly with us as well as the grocer at the corner of the street. Here details would only weaken the effect, so set your imagination to work. Amuse yourself by inventing what you can conceive as most touching, as showing most ingenuity in kindness ; you will still have understated the truth."

During this time Caraman worked hard at Berlin. At first Frederick William would only give the King permission to stay at Memel ; but later, hearing that the all-powerful First Consul of France did not object to the Bourbon Family finding an asylum in Prussia, he yielded to the entreaties of Queen Louise, to whom the Duchesse d'Angoulême had written on arriving at Memel, and allowed the King, as Comte de l'Isle, to remain temporarily at Warsaw, though he refused to pay his expenses there.

The journey to Warsaw was not accomplished without adventure, for at one point the ice in a half-frozen ditch gave way under the weight of the carriage. Once a horse was drowned crossing a ford and the others had a narrow escape of sharing its fate, and when the travellers reached Prague the Vistula had risen so high that two days passed before they were able to enter the town. "Nevertheless," says the King with unconquerable cheerfulness, "the result of all this is that my niece is well, and that I, who in consequence of the upset remained two hours with my feet in the snow or on the ice, with the rain falling on me, and might in reason expect a cold or the gout from the exposure,—I am insolent enough to be as well as possible."

The King only considered Warsaw a temporary residence, as he hoped eventually to be granted a

refuge in the dominions of the King of the Two Sicilies. The Polish nobility received him with enthusiasm, and he spent the winter in the house of the Princess Palatine of Cracow, moving in the summer out of the city to the Palace of Lazienki, which belonged to the King of Prussia. At Warsaw he lived simply, appearing in the streets without Royal trappings and almost without suite, and leading so quiet a life that even Bonaparte's police, who were set to watch him, could find nothing interesting to say about his doings. Nevertheless, though outwardly indifferent, he was in reality watching events with the utmost interest and anxiety.

Soon after his arrival he heard of the murder of Paul I and of the accession of Alexander, and began to wonder what the attitude of the new Czar would be towards him. "His rôle towards me will be embarrassing," he remarked in a letter to the Comte d'Artois; and he went on to argue with his usual sagacity that as Paul I, even while treating him with the utmost harshness, had never refused to acknowledge his title as King of France, it would be difficult for his successor to do less, and that this recognition of the rightfulness of his claim to occupy the throne of France would not be pleasing to the First Consul.

In spite of his hopes, Louis XVIII ended by spending three melancholy years in Warsaw, years when he was completely forgotten in France, while evil tidings poured in upon him in all directions.

The King's first and most pressing—as well as humiliating—*anxiety* was caused by his want of money. The Czar's subsidy had ceased. Louis XVIII had been obliged to contract a loan at Riga to pay the expenses

of his journey from Russia, and at Warsaw he was reduced to such straits that he was not even able to succour his impoverished followers. However, the Comte d'Artois came to his aid, and managed by loans to raise a sum of £3,000, which he at once despatched to relieve his brother's necessities. The British Government sent Louis XVIII £5,000, and promised an annual pension of £6,000, which, though not as much as he required, was generous, for England already supported the Comte d'Artois, the Duc de Bourbon, and the Orleans Princes, as well as the Duc de Condé, who since the disbandment of his little army had taken refuge there.

Eventually Alexander decided to continue the pension allowed the King by Paul I, and generously repaid it from the time of the departure of the Bourbons from Mittau ; so, though the other nations refused help, Louis XVIII was able to live without the wearing and humiliating anxiety about money affairs which had for a time assailed him. It is interesting to note, that when application was made by Alexander to Napoleon for pecuniary aid for the family he had supplanted, he refused to grant it unless the Bourbons would all consent to live together at some place distant from France. The First Consul made no secret of the fact that he hoped that this would lower them in the eyes of Europe, and Alexander therefore did not consider it expedient to enlighten the King as to his benevolent intentions.

A grave anxiety to the King at this time was the failing health of the unfortunate d'Avaray, whose constitution, always delicate, had been undermined by trouble, anxiety, and the rigour of the Russian climate. He thought his condition hopeless, and the Abbé Edge-

worth, in whom he confided, says that he did not seem to be alarmed at the idea of death, but that his one preoccupation was the idea of the solitude in which he would leave the master to whom he had consecrated his life; and that with courageous self-abnegation, he was most anxious to find some one who would eventually become a worthy successor to him. The King was terribly anxious about his illness, and mentions him continually in his letters to the Comte d'Artois, concern at the invalid condition of his faithful friend and companion, his "other self," being now added to his other troubles. However, for a time the catastrophe of a final separation seemed likely to be averted, for d'Avaray went to Italy, and came back in better health, though he was now obliged to winter there every year, and his departure left the King in a condition of miserable loneliness.

On d'Avaray's return from his second winter in the South, he brought with him the man destined to succeed him in the King's confidence, whose position as Royal favourite would in the early days of the French Restoration excite bitter anger throughout France. The Comte de Blacas had already been presented to the King by d'Avaray at Verona, and was now to become one of his most faithful servants. In 1802 he was rather over thirty years of age, and, unlike d'Avaray, was tall and good-looking. His devotion to the King was great, and he appears, like d'Avaray, to have been absolutely disinterested; while, unlike d'Avaray, he possessed considerable intellectual capacity, though the coldness and arrogance of his manners, even to those he should have conciliated, were, in the future, to enlist the whole Court against him. The King at once despatched him as envoy to

St. Petersburg, where he showed much cleverness, and his services were extremely valuable.

From a political point of view, the matter which occupied the King's mind most anxiously at this time was the question of the Concordat, or agreement signed between Pius VII and France, and of the exhortation which the Pope addressed a little later to the Bishops, enjoining those who had left the country to resign their posts in favour of the Bishops appointed to the new Sees. The King was naturally anxious that the Bishops should resist this order; and many were the letters he wrote on the subject. In the end he was, as usual, defeated; as the greater number of the Bishops obeyed the Pope's ordinance, so that, by Napoleon's astute policy, France again became an obedient daughter of the Holy See, and the help which, in contradistinction to the irreligion of Revolutionary France, the alliance between the Church and the Bourbons gave to the cause of the Monarchy, was as illusory as all the other supports on which Louis XVIII's hopes depended.

Many things concurred to worry the King at this time; for while the Comte d'Artois enjoyed himself in the society of Madame de Polastron, and left the Comtesse d'Artois, who was tinier, and even uglier and more extraordinary than her elder sister, to wander about Europe, with no one apparently to care what became of her except the King; he had taken upon himself the duties of father to his nephews, and the Duc de Berry caused him considerable anxiety.

Unlike his father and uncles, the Duc de Berry was essentially warlike, and had spent most of his time with Condé's army, where he had distinguished himself as a brave soldier. On the other hand, he was ex-

tremely dissipated, was cursed with an utter want of self-control, and his manners were often rude even to boorishness. Short in stature, low in forehead, he would have been ugly had it not been for the irresistible smile which from time to time lit up his face, and transformed its uncomeliness into something approaching beauty. Having successfully married the Duc d'Angoulême, Louis XVIII was anxious to do as much by his younger nephew, though the task of finding a suitable alliance was difficult, as Bourbon pride was unbending, and the Prince in his present condition could not be considered a very eligible parti.

However, to the King's delight, there had seemed to be some chance of marrying the Duc de Berry to one of the two Neapolitan Princesses ; and for some time negotiations for this alliance seemed to be progressing satisfactorily. The matter dragged on slowly, and the Duc de Berry, who was miserably poor and always in want of money, had been obliged to return to Condé's army. Here his poverty was extremely galling to him, and he was very jealous of the Duc d'Enghien, who, owing to the Russian subsidies, was comparatively well off, and, according to the Duc de Berry, was unduly favoured by his grandfather, the Duc de Condé, and was always given the best opportunities for distinguishing himself. Soon, however, Condé's army was disbanded, and at Warsaw the King heard that, partly influenced by reports about the dissipated character of the young Prince, the King and Queen of Naples refused to sanction his marriage with their daughter.

The Duc de Berry was in a most unfortunate position, for idleness at Holyrood with the Comte

d'Artois seemed the only course open to him ; and even before the matter of the marriage had been finally settled, he wrote in utter misery to the Uncle who had always acted a father's part towards him, to complain that "he was not intended for happiness."

Louis XVIII always shows at his best when dealing with his nephews, being tactful, patient, and both able and willing to enter into their peculiar difficulties, and not to expect from them the same high standard of serenity and courage he exhibited himself. He now tried to persuade the Comtesse d'Artois to make her son an allowance, and reminded his nephew that at the age of twenty-three he could hardly say that his fate was irrevocably fixed, while he tried to inculcate the philosophical reflection that it is impossible to judge rightly of the happiness or unhappiness of any life by its outward circumstances, for "fine weather has its storms, bad weather has its sunshine, the most happy men have troubles, the most miserable enjoyments."

The King was soon in a position to put his philosophy to practical account, for he was threatened with a danger which upset even *his* equanimity. When he spoke to the Duc and Duchesse d'Angoulême with much pleasure of the possible move from Warsaw to Naples about which he had been for some time in negotiation, they told him with the utmost grief that the Comte d'Artois did not consider Italy a safe country, and that if he were to take up his abode there, they had received orders not to accompany him, but to go to Holyrood. This news fell like a thunderbolt on the unfortunate King, who looked on his nephew and niece as his own children, and he wrote a pathetic letter to his brother, imploring that they should not be separated from him.

He pointed out, though with circumlocution necessary to the circumstances, that the presence and position of Madame de Polastron at Holyrood made it hardly a suitable home for the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and proposed that, instead of the Duc and Duchesse d'Angoulême moving to Scotland, the Comte d'Artois should come to Warsaw to see them.

"Finally, allow me a trivial comparison," he wrote. "Have you ever seen without a feeling of pity a hen who has brought up some ducklings? The difference is that the hen has no memory, and I have only too much."

However, in the disturbed state of Europe, and the ever-growing fear of the all-powerful ruler of France, this danger was averted; for it became as impossible for Louis XVIII to move to Italy, as it was for the Comte d'Artois to leave England.

In the beginning of the year 1803, in preparation for assuming the title of Emperor, Bonaparte requested Frederick William to obtain from Louis XVIII the renunciation of his rights to the throne of France, and in return for this concession the insatiable conqueror promised the King what he termed a "brilliant destiny."

Louis XVIII's answer to Napoleon's proposition ran as follows :

"I do not associate Bonaparte with some of those who preceded him. I admire his courage, his military talents. I am grateful to him for several acts of his Administration; for the good done to my people will always be dear to me. But he deceives himself if he thinks he will make me barter my rights. Far from that, he would have established them himself by the step he is now taking, if it had been possible for them to be doubtful.

“I do not know God’s designs for my race and for me, but I know the duties He has imposed on me by the rank in which it has pleased Him that I should be born. As a Christian, I shall perform these duties till my last breath. As a son of Saint Louis, I shall know, as he did, how to make myself respected, even in irons. As a successor to Francis Ist, I intend at least to be able to say with him, ‘We have lost everything, except honour.’”

Below these words the Duc d’Angoulême had written: “With the permission of the King, my Uncle, I adhere with my heart and soul to what is contained in this Declaration.”

The King of Prussia was much annoyed at the tone of Louis XVIII’s manifesto. He called it aggressive; and he begged the King to tone it down. His envoy advised Louis XVIII not to irritate the First Consul, and spoke of possible dangers.

“Dangers! What dangers?” answered the King proudly; “that of being hunted from Prussia? If your Sovereign, Sir, finds himself obliged to deprive me of this refuge, I shall pity him, and I shall go.”

“It is not that which is to be feared,” returned the Prussian functionary; “but Bonaparte may insist that Prussia and Spain shall cease the help——”

The King did not allow him to finish. “I do not fear poverty,” he said. “If it were necessary, I would eat black bread with my children and servants. But I shall never be reduced to that. I possess another resource, of which I do not consider it right to make use as long as I have powerful friends—that is, to make my condition known in France, and to hold out my hand, not to the Government of the usurper, but

to my faithful subjects ; and, believe me, I shall soon be richer than I now am."

The whole Bourbon Family, including the Orleans branch, sent in their adhesion to the King's Declaration ; and a year later, on March 21, 1804, Europe was roused to indignation by the news that, by Napoleon's orders, Condé's grandson, the young Duc d'Enghien, had been shot after a mock trial, on the accusation of having been implicated in a plot, set on foot by General Pichegru and by Georges Cadoudal, one of the Chouans, with the object of assassinating Bonaparte.

On May 18, 1804, the great step was taken, and Napoleon Bonaparte assumed the title of Emperor of the French. Louis XVIII wrote a circular letter to all the Courts of Europe protesting against this illegal act, and was now doubly anxious, not only to see the Comte d'Artois, from whom he had been parted for over ten years, but also to arrange for a reunion of the whole Bourbon Family, including the Orleans Princes. It was difficult to decide on a place for this meeting, which was to result in a solemn protestation against Napoleon's usurpation of the throne of France. Sweden seemed, on the whole, the most propitious locality ; for that country had been uniformly friendly to the Bourbons.

On application being made to Gustavus IV, he proved himself quite willing to show hospitality to the exiled family ; but many difficulties stood in the way. England was adverse to the idea of the meeting, and threatened that the Princes leaving there for the Bourbon reunion would most probably not be allowed to return. Alexander I also objected to the scheme, and said that the granting of a refuge to

the Comte de l'Isle in his dominions, had been dependent on his promise to live peaceably and quietly.

Louis XVIII was, however, quite determined to confer with the brother from whom he had been parted for so long; and, defying the Czar, he left Warsaw on July 30, 1804. This was later than he had intended, but he had been delayed by an illness which was supposed to be caused by poison. The Queen and the Duchesse d'Angoulême were left behind at Warsaw, and the King, accompanied by the Duc d'Angoulême, the faithful d'Avaray, and a small suite, made his way to Blankenfeld, where he was obliged to wait from August 25th till September 12th (1804) for a boat to take him across to Sweden.

At Blankenfeld another trouble came upon him, for d'Avaray's health was in so precarious a condition that the King was obliged to insist that he should not accompany the party.

At last it was possible to start; and after a terrible crossing, which took eleven days, the travellers arrived in Sweden. Even then the King's anxieties were not over, for the English Government, in their fear of Napoleon, were agitating to prevent the Comte d'Artois from coming to meet his brother; while Frederick William of Prussia felt obliged to assure the French Government that he had had nothing to do with the Comte de l'Isle's departure from Warsaw.

However, the death of the Comtesse de Polastron, which had left the Comte d'Artois in the utmost despair, had also had the effect of making him cling more closely than before to his family; and he managed by energetic efforts to evade the attempts made to detain him in England, and arrived at Calmar on October 7th. The brothers had gone through a long series of mis-

fortunes since they had last met ; in fact the marriage of the Duc d'Angoulême and his cousin seemed the one bright spot in their history. They had much to relate to each other ; but most of their discussions circled around a protestation against Napoleon's action in seizing the throne of France, which the King had drawn up, and wished to despatch to all parts of Europe. He had already sent one to the Powers signed by himself alone ; but the one in contemplation was to be submitted to the Princes for approval, and was then to be signed by all. There was much difficulty about this Declaration, as, after the French Princes had at last been persuaded to sanction it, Alexander I objected to its propagation ; and when the little pamphlet at last appeared, it had no circulation except in Germany. Louis XVIII's people, as usual, refused to listen to him ! However, this almost unnoticed Declaration is remarkable in Louis XVIII's history as marking a complete change in his policy. In it he deserted for the first time the tenets of the Ancien Régime, and promised forgetfulness of past political offences, preservation of the Imperial grades and titles, and of the rights of property, and maintenance of the doctrine of liberty and equality.

Other anxious consultations at Calmar treated of finding a new refuge for the King ; for during his stay there, he received a letter from Prussia stating that after the interview between the two brothers, it would be incompatible with the neutrality which the King of Prussia wished to observe, for the Comte de l'Isle to remain any longer at Warsaw. Therefore, a new retreat must be found, and the Comte d'Artois was eager in advising England. Unfortunately, however, the British Ministers, in view of Napoleon's

threatening attitude towards their country, were not at all anxious to offer an asylum to Louis XVIII; and the attempts of the Duc d'Orléans to influence the Regent in this direction were uniformly unsuccessful.

Russia seemed the only likely place of refuge; but to Louis XVIII's intense disappointment, Alexander I wished to establish his guest at Kiew, a miserable little town near the Black Sea. Louis XVIII was in despair at this decision: "If I am sent there," he wrote to his brother, "every good Frenchman, I at the head of them, will only have one prayer to make, which will be to ask God to deliver my soul and body as quickly as possible from their prison. . . . My friend, if you can do no better, get them to leave me at Mittau. It is to this that I am reduced."

At the beginning of the spring of 1805, the King received permission to go to Mittau, but under very changed conditions from his last sojourn there. In the year 1800 he had been received as King, had been surrounded by a Royal Guard, and greeted everywhere with Royal honours; now he was only allowed to enter Russia on sufferance as Comte de l'Isle—a condition he found intensely humiliating—and when he arrived with the Queen, the Duc and Duchesse d'Angoulême, and his small party of faithful adherents, he had hardly any means of receiving news from the outside world, and was besides in a condition of the most paralysing poverty.

Almost the only tidings which reached him from the outside world, besides the death of the poor Comtesse d'Artois, who was apparently missed by no one, were accounts of Napoleon's brilliant victories, and of his successive entries into Vienna and Berlin;

while the one important break in this weary time seems to have been a visit from the Czar at the beginning of the year 1807. The King then begged Alexander for the same recognition of his kingly rank that had been accorded to him by Paul I, and for permission to march with the armies of the Coalition. Both these requests were refused; and the Czar considered the King "the most empty and insignificant man in Europe," and was certain that he would never ascend the throne of France. He therefore troubled no more about him, and the unfortunate Louis XVIII continued to chafe in his lonely retreat. His joy was all the greater when he received a letter from Gustavus IV of Sweden, summoning him to a Conference about assembling an army of Émigrés, to assist the King of Sweden in wresting his German possessions from Napoleon.

However, before Louis XVIII had time to start for Sweden, which he hoped might be merely a temporary stopping-place on the way to England, Napoleon won the battle of Friedland; and at Tilsit peace was declared between France, Russia, and Austria. Therefore Gustavus IV was left in desperate plight, and the Czar, who had hitherto approved of Louis XVIII's proposed journey, now felt it necessary to announce to Napoleon's Chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg, that he had had nothing to do with the Comte de l'Isle's departure to Sweden.

Louis XVIII was unfortunate in his crossings. He started from Libau in the Swedish frigate *La Troja*, on September 3rd, 1807; the tempest in the Baltic was so violent that on the 15th the boat had not arrived, and the captain declared that in the twenty-five years during which he had navigated the Baltic,

he had never before been out in such a storm. The Queen and the Duchesse d'Angoulême had fortunately remained at Mittau; but the sufferings of d'Avaray and of the Duc d'Angoulême, who were both bad sailors, were intense.

When the travellers arrived in Sweden, their reception was discouraging; for Gustavus was just recovering from a severe illness, and was physically weak, and discouraged by his defeats. Though determined to treat the King with the greatest honour, he was most anxious that his stay in Sweden should be short, as he feared to bring upon himself the wrath of the all-powerful Napoleon. He therefore did his best to strengthen the King in his resolve to find a domicile in England; and it was settled that Louis XVIII should write to George III announcing his impending arrival on his shores, and should, without waiting for an answer from his Majesty's Ministers, follow quickly in the wake of his letter.

He started on this journey surrounded with as much ceremonious homage as though he were really wearing the crown of France; but unfortunately his letter arrived later than himself off Yarmouth, and his reception there was not encouraging. From certain vague indications, the English Government had expected that sooner or later the French King would appear off their shores, and had prepared the Palace of Holyrood for his reception. Therefore, when Louis XVIII prepared to land at Yarmouth, the Commander of the Port would not permit this, but requested him to disembark at Leith in Scotland. This the King refused to do; and thinking there must be some misunderstanding, he remained off Yarmouth, waiting for further news.

Meanwhile his letter had been received in London, and had caused a great sensation; for instead of merely asking for a refuge, the King announced that he had come "to discuss with George III measures for going in person to deliver his subjects from oppression, and for seizing his father's heritage from the hands of the usurper, and restoring peace to Europe." He went on to say that he hoped to be a powerful ally to the King of England, that the mask must be torn from Napoleon, and truth must be heard. "Nevertheless," he continues, "your Majesty alone will not make it audible; sacred as is your word, it requires a guarantor; can you find a better than the brother and heritor of Louis XVI crying: 'Frenchmen, I attest to you that George III's intentions are as disinterested as his personal character is magnanimous!'" The King then enlarged on the fact that though in "the alliance between him and George III the principal advantages would be on his side, all Europe would profit by bringing to an end the bloody calamities caused by the Corsican usurper."

As England was not at all inclined to come forward to champion the Bourbon cause, this letter was received with consternation, especially as it appeared that a house had already been taken for Louis XVIII in London. Therefore George III in his answer, while deploring the fact that instead of merely seeking a refuge in England, the French King had come there with the intention of entering into political negotiations, begged him at once to make his way to Edinburgh, where he would find Holyrood prepared for him.

To this Louis XVIII answered that he would prefer a return to Mittau to being forced to seek refuge in

Holyrood; and two days passed in the interchange of letters, and in heated discussions, which were at last ended by the intervention of the Duc d'Orléans, who, after inducing Louis XVIII to promise that he would not attempt to go to London, persuaded the Prince of Wales to obtain permission from the Ministers for him to land at Yarmouth. The Marquis of Buckingham now came forward, and offered the King hospitality at Gosfield, his house in Essex. The Government became rather tardily doubtful whether they were treating his French Majesty with the honour due to him; and Canning wrote a diplomatic letter to Bagot, telling him to meet Louis XVIII at Yarmouth; and if he did not arrive in time to do this, to invent picturesque and flattering excuses for his tardiness. Writing from Hounslow on November 1st, 1807, Canning says: "I have thought myself into a complete conviction that we have not done altogether right in respect to Louis XVIII. If we could have obliged him to go to Edinburgh, well—but having once consented to his landing, we ought not to let him land like a Scrub, and leave him without protection or attention."¹

However, Louis XVIII was quite pleased with the reception accorded to him, as he was greeted on his arrival on British shores by the Comte d'Artois, the Duc d'Angoulême, and the Prince de Condé, and was surrounded at once by a crowd of people, who looked at him with real interest, and said, "It is the King of France, it is Louis XVIII, it is Louis XVI's brother!" He complained, however, of the want of ordinary facilities for travelling, and said that he could get no post-horses to convey him on the

¹ Bagot, *Canning and his Friends*, vol. i. p. 250.

route to Gosfield. He met with sundry admirers on the way, and tried to talk English to them, and he was so much struck by the beauty of the English women that at Colchester, where they formed a circle round him, he could not eat his lunch for looking at them. One lady held a little boy of five or six by the hand, and the child said, "Vive le Roi!" "I shook heartily hand with him," says the King; and he was much annoyed that he could not talk to the pretty ladies. "What opinion," thought he, "will these ladies have of French gallantry?" This idea gave him courage, and he addressed a remark generally, "If any one of these ladies could understand French?" "Then," he says, "I was interrupted by a general chorus, which pointed out one (very pretty, by the by). She expressed herself in very good French, and with the modest grace peculiar to English women."¹

The stop at Colchester was a great success, and, as the King left, the crowd "cheered us with three hurrahs!"

Louis XVIII's relations with the English Government were not as happy as those he enjoyed with the public.

In vain he tried to induce the King's Ministers to allow him to take up his abode in London, or anywhere in its vicinity, or even to make a short sojourn there. The refusal was stern; and when, in defiance of the rule which forbade him to approach London within fifteen miles, he went, without asking permission, to pay the Prince de Condé a visit at Wanstead House, the rebuke he received was humiliating, and in it for the first time since his arrival in England, he was referred to as the Comte de l'Isle.

¹ Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration*, vol. iii p. 436.

It was evident that if he wished to be accorded Royal dignities in England he must live quietly at a distance from the capital, and must not meddle with politics.

However, while in his life at Gosfield, and afterwards at Hartwell, he was denied participation in the politics of the great world, the petty scheming of the little circle of *Émigrés* in which he found himself, gave him plenty of occupation and many worries.

Even if the Comte d'Artois welcomed Louis XVIII's appearance on the scene, his followers certainly objected strongly to the fact that their dignity was diminished, by the chief authority being shifted from their master to his brother. They vented their jealous indignation chiefly on d'Avary, who found his position most miserable, being accused by the Duc d'Angoulême of arranging the journey to England for his own ends, while the Comte d'Artois informed him that he managed affairs badly, and he was the mark of the *Émigrés'* constant calumny. He now lived in a little house in Chelsea, whence he still tried to be useful to his Master, but he was nearly worn out by bad health, worry, and the hardships he had endured, and in 1810 the doctors ordered him to go to Madeira. He obeyed their orders with the utmost reluctance, hating to be parted from the King ; and his only consolation was the fact that he left him in the charge of the Comte de Blacas.

Meanwhile, in 1809, Louis XVIII had moved to Hartwell, in Buckinghamshire, where he lived in a circumscribed circle, paying occasional visits to the people in the neighbourhood, receiving all the news he could from France, but otherwise, if we except the etiquette always observed around him, leading the life of an ordinary gentleman of literary tastes. Here

Gustavus IV, who after a military revolution had abdicated in favour of his uncle, came to pay the King a three months' visit, and here on November 12th, 1810, the exiled Queen of France breathed her last. She had not been a pleasant companion to the King, and at the last she seemed to realise this, for she called him to her bedside to thank him in the most touching terms for the attentions he had shown her, and to beg him to forgive her for the pain she had caused him, and to believe "that her heart had counted for nothing in what she might have done to afflict him."

The King felt her loss very deeply. In a confidential letter written to d'Avaray at Madeira, he says: "I confess I did not realise I loved the Queen so much. I felt one thing very much—that the days when her health (how unjust it was of me to think her an imaginary invalid) acted on her temper, I was sad all day; and that, on the contrary, when she was better, and was herself, then I was gay and in high spirits, but I did not try to find the reason for either feeling."¹

Some months later, when spring had decked the world with beauty, he writes again to d'Avaray: "When I breathe this pure air I say to myself, It would have done her so much good! I have at this moment a white camellia under my eyes, which has never been so beautiful as this year. I remember that I bought it for her birthday on our arrival here. I walk in the garden; I see my rose-trees, which are budding well. To whom shall I offer the roses?" Often he says to himself mechanically, "I must tell her this"; and then remembers that she is no longer there to listen.

One of the King's letters to his friend gives a

¹ *Lettres d'Artwell*, December 2, 1810.

peaceful picture of him, of which it is pleasant to think in the midst of the petty disagreements and jealousies which made up the life of most of the *Émigrés*.

He says : "The lilacs have not done as well as I had hoped—many have suffered ; but the laburnums have been superb. The heliotrope now scent the whole garden, there are a good number of roses, and the fruit-trees—in the full wind, be it understood—are so full of fruit that this morning I noticed a plum-tree which was like a vine at its best period."¹

When the King wrote this letter, the friend to whom it was addressed had left this world for ever. D'Avaray had taken to his bed on Ascension Day, May 23rd, 1811, and knew that he was dying, his only regret being that he should never again see his King. On the day of his death he had the last letter he had received from the King re-read to him. It expressed a hope of seeing him soon again. "It is in the sky, my dear Master," he wrote, "that this meeting will take place, if God has pity on me."

When the news of d'Avaray's death arrived in England the King had a bad attack of gout, and his doctors considered that it would be dangerous to inform him that he had lost the faithful companion of his wanderings. When he was told of the catastrophe, he was for some time quite inconsolable. Sorrow after sorrow had been heaped on him during the long odyssey on which we have accompanied him, but the loss of the man who was "his other self" must have been the bitterest affliction, the most irreparable calamity of all.

¹ *Lettres d'Artwell*, April 1, 1811.

CHAPTER XI

Napoleon at bay—Louis XVIII's liberal Proclamation—Treaty of Fontainebleau—Affairs in France—Talleyrand—Louis XVIII summoned to reign over France—Is kept in England by gout—Constitution drawn up by Provisional Government—Monsieur's hesitation to acknowledge this—His entry into Paris—The mischief he does—Louis XVIII leaves Hartwell—Reception in London—Crossing—Amiens—Compiègne—Napoleon's Marshals—Interviews with Talleyrand, the Comte d'Artois, Alexander I—The Corps Législatif, the Senate—Declaration of Saint-Ouen—Entry into Paris—Madame—The Old Guard.

DURING the latter part of the five years Louis XVIII spent at Hartwell, it might well have seemed to a casual observer, that his overmastering desire for a return to his own country must have faded, till it gave place to contentment in a peaceful, if not a happy ending to his days. This idea, however, would have been incorrect ; for though so physically worn out and aged that, with tact and sagacity unimpaired, he was unequal to taking any decided initiative, or to coping with a sudden emergency, his longing to reign over France had only grown stronger with years. Moreover, the irony of fate had decreed that his ardent wish should in the end be fulfilled, and that for the last nine years of his life, with failing powers, and surrounded by hostile criticism, he should be placed on a pinnacle, and be called upon to battle with a task of almost unparalleled difficulty.

While Louis XVIII was enjoying his garden, weep-

ing over the memory of a wife whose death, while causing him sincere sorrow, certainly rendered his existence less troubled, and mourning the irreparable loss of a friend whose place could never be filled, great events were taking place in Europe. Napoleon was now fighting against overwhelming odds, not for the mastery of the world, but for the protection of France, and for his own political existence.

The disastrous Russian campaign, culminating in the awful retreat from Moscow, had aroused the horror of Europe, and the English papers had published an appeal from Louis XVIII to the Czar, on behalf of the miserable French soldiers: "What difference does the question of the flag they have marched under make to me? They are unfortunate; I only see in them my children. I recommend them to the goodness of his Imperial Majesty. May he think of all they have suffered! May he deign to soften the hardship of their misfortunes! May they feel, in short, that their conqueror is their Father's friend. His Imperial Majesty cannot give me a more touching proof of his feelings towards me!"

In spite of his apparent absorption in trifles, and his placidity—a placidity obligatory as long as he remained in England—Louis XVIII was at this time most active in the work of sending emissaries to the Allies, with the object of persuading them to declare that it was for the benefit of the Bourbon cause that they had taken up arms against Napoleon. The King's efforts were, however, in vain, for the Great Continental Powers adhered to their usual policy, and refused to pledge themselves to anything—if the French wanted the Bourbons, they must recall them on their own initiative.

However, in February 1813, the King took an even

more decided step in the right direction than he had done in 1804, as he published a manifesto, in which he declared that he only hoped to gain the throne of France by the efforts of his faithful subjects, that he promised to maintain the existing administrative and judicial bodies, and to keep the present functionaries in their employments, that he would endeavour to arbitrate fairly about national properties, would abolish conscription, and would forget the errors which had taken place in the past. In fact, he practically promised to sanction all the work done by the Revolution.

Events now followed each other in quick succession. On March 31st, 1814, after unsuccessful negotiations between Napoleon and the Powers at Châtillon-sur-Seine, the allied armies made their entry into Paris, and peace was declared between Europe and France. News of this was brought to the London Stock Exchange, where it caused great excitement and delight. Some one at once wrote two lines in pencil to inform Louis XVIII of the happy event, and, travelling by stage-coach, the scrap of paper reached Hartwell at eight the same evening. It was received with the utmost emotion, and the King sat up till after midnight in the vain hope of receiving confirmation of the glad tidings.

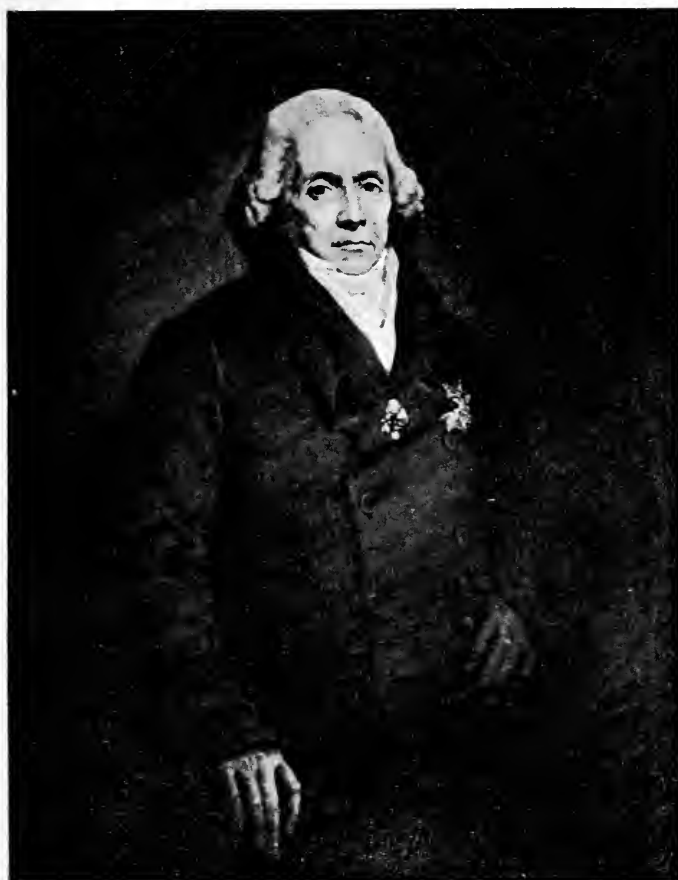
Next day, however, while he was at Mass, two carriages decorated with white flags, filled with men wearing white scarves, drove up the avenue to Hartwell. These were the deputies from loyal Bordeaux, the first place in France to offer allegiance to its lawful Sovereign. The office was not interrupted, but news of their arrival circulated through the Chapel, and at her devotions the Duchesse d'Angoulême could see through the window the postilions and horses decked with the symbol of the Bourbon Monarchy ;

while for Louis XVIII the latter part of the service may well have consisted in fervent thanks to God.

On April 2nd, the Senate established a Provisional Government with Talleyrand at its head, and declared that Napoleon Bonaparte, having repeatedly violated the right and liberties of the people, and the laws of the Constitution, had forfeited the throne of France; and on April 11th the Treaty of Fontainebleau was signed between Napoleon and the Allied Powers. By this treaty Napoleon was allowed to retain the title of Emperor, and was given the sovereignty of the island of Elba, with a revenue of two millions of francs.

Before these events had taken place, the excitement among the Émigrés had found vent in action, and in January 1814, Monsieur and his two sons had embarked, Monsieur for Holland, the Duc d'Angoulême for St. Jean-de-Luz, and the Duc de Berry for Jersey.

Nothing can be more incorrect than the statement that the Bourbons were restored to the throne by foreign arms, though this supposed fact has often been used as a weapon against them by their enemies. The Powers did indeed in the end refuse to treat with Napoleon, and insisted that he should be deposed, as they considered his position as head of the French nation a constant menace to the peace of Europe; but they had for the most part no particular wish to see the Bourbons again invested with the crown of France. Monsieur indeed was obliged for a month to wander about Holland, nervously avoiding the armies of the Allies, and not being allowed to enter France; while the position of the Duc d'Angoulême was even more galling. He had, in the name of Louis XVIII, taken possession of Bordeaux and of the province surrounding it, was exhibiting the white flag everywhere, and had



From a mezzotint, after the picture by Scheffer.

TALLEYRAND.

posted notices in the town stating that the Bourbon cause was supported by the Allies. For this he was severely reprimanded by the Duke of Wellington, who told the Prince that he would have nothing to do with an undertaking in which the exact truth was not observed ; while he followed this strong censure by the announcement that if the Duc d'Angoulême did not in the course of twenty-four hours deny the statement, he would be forced to make a public retraction of it himself.

However, the real work of deciding the all-important question was going on at Paris in Talleyrand's house in the rue Saint-Florentin, where the Provisional Government was established on the entresol ; Alexander I of Russia, who took the lead among the assembled Monarchs, occupied the first floor ; and on the second his Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Comte de Nesselrode, was established with his secretary. The house was like a beehive, incessantly crowded, incessantly in a state of agitation ; work went on there continually, eager people thronged the audience-chamber, and there was never any quiet anywhere, or any difference between night and day. "It was a curious sight," says one of the Provisional Government,¹ "to see Monsieur de Talleyrand with his embarrassed walk trying to pass from his bedroom to his library, to give audience to some one he had promised to see, and who had been waiting for hours. It was necessary to pass through the drawing-room. He was stopped by one, seized by another, his passage barred by a third, till, worn out, he would return whence he had come, despairing of getting to the unfortunate person who was waiting in vain."

¹ Comte Beugnot, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 101.

Talleyrand, Prince de Bénévent, deputy of the States-General, excommunicated priest, supporter and Minister of Napoleon, and latterly his bitter enemy, was now the arbiter of the destinies of France ; and it was in the informal conversations he held with the Czar, that the Restoration of the Bourbons was decided on. During his exile, Louis XVIII was often blamed for his illusions, but surely even he, would hardly have looked to Talleyrand as a possible supporter of his cause. However, the wildly improbable had come to pass, as it often did in France in those strangely disturbed times ; and Talleyrand was absolutely determined that the Bourbons should be restored, though he was equally firm in his resolution that they must govern constitutionally. Alexander was not enthusiastic about the Legitimist cause ; he did not, as we know, admire Louis XVIII ; but there was no one to substitute for him, for to place Napoleon's son on the throne with his mother as Regent, would infallibly have meant that Napoleon's influence would soon have become paramount ; while to Alexander's timid proposition that Napoleon's General, Bernadotte, now Crown Prince of Sweden, should take his master's place, Talleyrand answered firmly that if France required a soldier, it would be best for her to keep to Napoleon, the first soldier in the world.

The Restoration of the Bourbons was therefore in reality settled by the few Imperial functionaries who formed the Provisional Government, with the wily and unscrupulous Talleyrand at their head ; while the chiefs of the Coalition gave an almost reluctant assent to the necessity of the triumph of the Legitimist cause, and the Royalists had little or nothing to do with the matter.

Therefore the irony of fate, which always pursued Louis XVIII, had decreed that the many spider's webs industriously spun by him during the long years of exile should hinder instead of help his cause; for he would certainly have mounted the throne with a freer hand had he never encouraged the Vendéans to keep up a civil war in France, or sent numberless agents to conduct complicated intrigues, with the object—as expressed in the sentimental phraseology then in vogue—of recalling his “erring children to their Father's arms.”

Royalist enthusiasm certainly existed in the country, for a few of the Municipal Council began to clamour for the Bourbons, and apparently also for a return to the Ancien Régime. This Talleyrand was determined to avoid at all hazards; and he decided that, while the recall of Louis XVIII to the throne of his fathers was now the only possible course, a Constitution must be drawn up; and to this the King must swear allegiance before taking possession of Royal power. By this Constitution the King was granted the Executive power, but was summoned to reign not by hereditary right, but by the will of the people, who “called by their free will to the throne Louis Stanislas Xavier de France, brother to the last King, and after him the other members of the House of Bourbon in their old order.”

Meanwhile, Monsieur had been summoned to Paris by the Provisional Government; and as Louis XVIII was kept at Hartwell by an attack of gout, his brother took the position of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, and on April 12th, 1814, was received with the utmost enthusiasm in Paris, where his charm of manner won all hearts. There were many difficulties

to be surmounted before his arrival in the capital, and many awkward questions to be decided. For instance, should he be obliged to appear in Paris with the tri-coloured cockade instead of the white one which he had distributed everywhere on his journey ; should he receive his office of Lieutenant-General as a birth-right, or should it be delegated to him by the Senate ; above all, would he consent in his brother's name to sign the Constitution drawn up by the Senate, which certainly denied the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings ?

On the day of his entry he had not yet done this, and though the people manifested the utmost joy as he rode through the streets, on the "only happy day that he had had for thirty years," the Senate held aloof till he should sign the Constitutional Act presented to him. To do this caused Monsieur the utmost repugnance, and it was not till pressure had been put upon him by the Czar as well as by Talleyrand, that he consented to receive the Senate ; and then—instead of swearing in his brother's name to accept the Constitution—he annoyed Talleyrand by saying "that he was not afraid of being disclaimed when he swore." However, most people were amply satisfied by this expression ; and Monsieur's charm of manner, his happiness at returning to his country, his courtesy, and kindly consideration to those with whom he came into contact, aroused the utmost enthusiasm, and contrasted most favourably with the unceremonious manners of the late Emperor.

The Comte d'Artois was radiantly happy, and even the signature of the Constitutional Act only clouded the horizon for him temporarily, as in his opinion it would soon be replaced by the paternal government

of the Ancien Régime. It was therefore occasionally difficult to remember that in England was a gouty, helpless invalid who would make his appearance before long, and would relegate the Lieutenant-General to a secondary position. Vitrolles, the Prince's principal adviser, who had been sent by the Provisional Government to hasten his arrival in Paris, says, speaking of three days after his entry there :

“In the middle of our conversation the Prince interrupted himself suddenly with a look of astonishment.

“‘And the King?’ he said.

“‘How, the King?’ I answered.

“‘And the King!’ he began again; ‘we have been here for three days, and we have not written to him.’”¹

The existence of the King was certainly a disagreeable fact; but Monsieur tried to console himself by remembering his brother's infirmities.

“The King has excellent brains,” he said, “as clear as at thirty years of age; but he is helpless, or nearly so. Well! *he* will think for us, and *we* shall act for him!”²

With Louis XVIII's distrust of the wisdom of his brother's actions, it seemed unlikely that he would view with complacency this programme, which would relegate him decidedly to the background; and it must be allowed that in view of his chances of reigning in peace and security, his attack of gout was most inopportune. The brothers had, as we know, been fond of each other in the past, but the quarrels between

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. ii. p. 28.

² Beugnot, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 145.

their followers in England, and the small rankling reasons for jealousy which arise continually when a number of people without sufficient occupation are confined together in a small space, had impaired the cordiality of their feelings for each other ; so that the warmth of brotherly affection which had caused the Comte d'Artois to spare himself no pains to provide for his brother's pecuniary necessities, and Louis XVIII to feel intense gratitude for his efforts, had cooled ; and the Comte d'Artois looked upon the King with suspicion, as the exponent of the temporising policy which in his opinion had brought Louis XVI to destruction.

Louis XVIII, on the other hand, felt no confidence in his brother's wisdom ; and when, before leaving England, he was congratulated by the Duc de Duras on seeing the crown firmly established in the House of Bourbon, he answered :

“ Well established : that depends.”

“ Is it not, then, the King's intention to accept the crown ? ”

“ I accept it,” answered Louis XVIII, “ and it will remain in our hands if I survive my brother. But if he survives me, I answer for nothing.”¹

Monsieur was already beginning to do harm ; for a masterly inactivity was impossible to him ; he must always be at work. Therefore, instead of trying with patriotic self-abnegation to strengthen the throne by enrolling himself under the King's orders, and thus helping to weld the discordant elements of party into a workable whole, he surrounded himself with passionate and prejudiced Royalists, and put himself at the head of the party in the State which was to become a far

¹ See Daudet's *Émigration*, vol. iii. p. 534.

greater embarrassment to the King's Government than were the most violent Revolutionaries. In fact, a competent observer¹ traces the foundation of nearly all the mistakes which brought about the success of Napoleon's Hundred Days, to the time when Monsieur held the reins of government. Perhaps this is saying too much, but at any rate Louis XVIII had good reason to execrate his inopportune attack of gout. With Louis XVIII's arrival in Paris Monsieur became comparatively innocuous, but even then he managed to hamper the march of the Government by establishing a secret police of his own, which naturally caused the greatest trouble to the authorised body; and when Comte Beugnot, the Director of the Governmental Police, remonstrated with him on the subject, he accused him of having Bonapartists as agents and officials.

However, in these early days, people considered that when once the King made his appearance, all wrong would be righted; and Louis XVIII's goodness and extreme wisdom were the principal topics of the day. When Comte Beugnot complained of Monsieur's doings, and of the sort of men with whom he was surrounded, to the Bailli de Crussol, who had known the Prince from his youth, "Eh! good heavens, it is hardly necessary to tell me that," answered the Bailli. "That weakness is not a novelty; I fought it forty-five years ago. Follow my advice, get the King to come; get him to come as soon as you can. He is not the kind of man to allow the bread to be eaten out of his hand; not one of those people you speak of will dare to appear twice before him. The King will take possession of the Government; and you

¹ Pasquier's *Mémoires*, p. 7.

may feel quite comfortable, he will only leave his brother what he cannot take from him.”¹

This sounded hopeful ; but the Bailli reckoned without Blacas, who, though bitterly hated by Monsieur, was a Royalist of the old type. Already the usual fate of a Royal favourite was preparing for him, and people were asking each other, with a contempt which hardly hid the distrustful alarm behind the question : “ Who is this Monsieur de Blacas ? ”

The Duc de Liancourt Rochefoucauld had been sent by Talleyrand to the King at Hartwell, in the hope that Louis XVIII's reception of him would show his intention to forgive all the past offences. For the Duke had sinned deeply ; first in siding with the Revolution, and afterwards, when deprived of his office as “ Grand Maître,” by returning his “ cordon bleu ” to the King. But the Duke was not received by his Royal Master, but by “ a certain Monsieur de Blacas, who guards all avenues.” Already the storm was brewing.

The news of Louis XVIII's formal recall to France reached him by a messenger sent from the Regent, who arrived at Hartwell at three o'clock in the morning, and was conducted by Monsieur de Blacas, lighted by a single candle, down a dark passage to the King's bedroom. There Louis XVIII received the tidings that the great longing of his life was at last to be satisfied, with the quiet dignity which always characterised him.

In England, the news was received with acclamations of joy, for the recall of the Bourbons meant the downfall of the hated Bonaparte ; and when Louis XVIII went to London on his way back to his own country, troops were sent out to Stanmore to act as his

¹ Beugnot, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 166.

escort, and crowds assembled to cheer him. His carriage, which also contained the Duchesse d'Angoulême, the Prince de Condé, and the Duc de Bourbon, was drawn through the London streets by eight white Hanoverian horses, and was surrounded by English gentlemen on horseback wearing white cockades.

Thus was Louis XVIII conducted along the Edgware Road, into Hyde Park by Cumberland Gate, and out again by Hyde Park Corner to Albemarle Street, where a house had been prepared for him and a guard of honour was in waiting. In the evening, the Regent gave a grand party at Carlton House in his honour. All this must have been most intoxicating to the man who for so many years had sued humbly for a refuge, and had submitted perforce to rebuffs and humiliations and in Louis XVIII's joy, and his gratitude to the English people for having given him an asylum, he made a great mistake. For, after he had presented the Regent with the Order of St. Esprit, and had received in return that of the Garter, he made a speech, with the acclamations of the people ringing in his ears ; and finished with the words :

“It is to the counsels of your Royal Highness, to this glorious country, and to the confidence of its inhabitants, that I shall always attribute, in addition to Divine Providence, the re-establishment of our House on the Throne of its Fathers.”

These words were doubtless a natural expression of the King's first transports of joy and gratitude ; but they were most unfortunate, and lacked the tact usually characteristic of Louis XVIII's public utterances. They excluded all idea of the contract between him and the French people insisted on by the Moderate party, to whom he in reality owed his crown ; and the stress laid

on foreign intervention tended, not only to lower the prestige of the Bourbon Family in the eyes of all patriots, but also to hurt the feelings of the Royalists, who were now rejoicing in the very natural idea that their energetic efforts were the cause of the triumph of the legitimate Monarchy.

The French King stayed for three days in London, and then, accompanied by the Regent, he went to Dover and embarked on the English yacht *Royal Sovereignty*, which was escorted by the Duke of Clarence's frigate, by eight vessels of the line, and by a crowd of smaller boats decorated with flags ; while from the cliffs, the guns of the Royal Artillery fired salvoes.

In the words of a Royalist writer :¹ "Two hours sufficed to transport to Calais the Prince summoned by so many prayers. It was April 24th, 1814, the weather was splendid, and I have heard those present say that a more noble sight had never been offered for their admiration. The people covered the shore. The British vessels had opened their ranks to let the pleasure yacht approach which a glorious fortune wafted on already peaceful waters. The whole garrison of Lille, after a forced march, arrived at this happy moment, led by the brave General Maison, and represented the French Army in this touching reconciliation, where hearts mingled without explanations being necessary. Maréchal Moncy, who was embraced by the King, courtiers who came again to take the posts they or their fathers had occupied, magistrates who brought congratulations, women who burst into tears, the confused cries of the multitude, made a charming medley.

¹ *Mémoires de Madame de Chastenay*, vol. ii. p. 349.

“Then landed this King, whose age and infirmities inspired respect, while his look, the sound of his voice, his gentle words, were so many tokens of love. Madame, in the simplicity of a most modest toilette, the foreign fashion of which made it particularly remarkable, was affable without realising it, merely by her absolute naturalness. Undisguised virtue shone in her. After the pompous spectacles full of prepared effects, and arrogance, which were the fashion under Bonaparte, people were surprised at a grandeur so natural and unlaboured. But was there time for thinking? An open carriage waited on the shore, fiery steeds champed their bits, the sailors themselves dragged the King. The church, where the *Te Deum* was less chanted than cried in chorus, would not hold all who wished to enter it; the town, the shore, all had become a temple, and it was with no division from heaven that Justice and Peace embraced each other on earth.”

So Louis XVIII saw his country again, after an exile of twenty-three years.

The arrival at Amiens was no less successful than that at Calais; but at Compiègne, where the King remained for several days, more anxious thoughts must have intruded themselves, for he received a copy of the Constitution drawn up by the Senate. In this the doctrine of legitimacy was denied, so that the King, strictly speaking, had no right to the title of Louis XVIII, as Louis XVII had never reigned, and he was merely summoned by the French people to follow his brother, Louis XVI, on the throne. The King received the document with his usual dignity; but said nothing which would bind his future action in any way.

At Compiègne, the King gave many audiences, receiving political personages, functionaries, and other notabilities who had flocked out of Paris to pay their respects to him. Every one was charmed by his personality ; in spite of his excessive stoutness, he was "every inch a King," and his fine features, the brilliant eyes which could at times intimidate even the Monarch of All the Russias, but were also capable of an expression of bonhomie and of extreme kindness, won him general admiration. His kingliness was remarkable, and, with all his courtesy and gentleness, he could use it as an insurmountable barrier between himself and the world at large. His reserve kept others at a distance, for he possessed to perfection the power of never revealing his thought or intention, and his wit, as well as the literary character of his conversation, were sometimes alarming.

Therefore, as people began to know him well, they found something repellent though fascinating about him, as there is wherever an incalculable quantity exists in character. His mind was, unlike his brother's, impossible to fathom, and his bland serenity covered him like a mask, so that those who approached him found him difficult to influence, and were conscious of a feeling of insecurity, for they were often unable to guess from his manner how he regarded them.

His happy way of expressing himself, however, covered a multitude of sins, particularly on an occasion like this, when he knew instinctively the right thing to say to each person who approached him. Even his infirmities helped him. What could have been more graceful than his behaviour to Napoleon's Marshals, who had flocked to Compiègne to be the first to offer congratulations ; a duty which they performed in

somewhat servile fashion. As they stood respectfully round him, he tried to rise, and two of the officers of his household came forward as usual to assist him ; but refusing their assistance, he seized the arms of the two Marshals nearest, and said :

“It is on you, Messieurs, that I wish to support myself ; come near and surround me. You have always been good Frenchmen. I hope that France will no longer have need of your swords, but if ever, which God forbid, we were forced to draw them, gouty as I am, I should march with you.”

Talleyrand was not so fortunate, for to him Louis XVIII's apparently charming remarks were provided with a sting of which he must have been conscious, though he pretended to ignore it. He had in reality secured the crown for Louis XVIII; but, probably because that fact revolted Bourbon pride, and was, if possible, to be slurred over, he was kept waiting for two or three hours when he came to seek for an audience, and was only admitted at last by the intervention of Monsieur de Blacas. The King, however, received him with his usual charm of manner, and began the conversation by these words :

“Monsieur le Prince de Bénévent, I am charmed to see you again. Many things have happened since we last saw each other. You realise that we have been the cleverest. If it had been you, you would say to me : Let us sit down and talk ; as it is I, I say : Sit down, and let us talk.”¹

In relating this conversation to his intimates, Talleyrand affected to be absolutely charmed with the King's politeness, and with the way he established equality between himself and his visitor, while he appeared not

¹ Beugnot, *Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 147.

to notice the sly insinuation that after all it was the King, not the Prince de Bénévent, who was in the end triumphant, and with gracious forgiveness accorded his favours to his disloyal servant. He also, in telling the story, omitted the fact that the King refused altogether to discuss public affairs with him, or to listen to his warnings on the folly of keeping the Senate waiting for his signature. Louis XVIII did not intend to put himself under the tutelage of Monsieur de Talleyrand.

Another person who cannot have enjoyed his visit to Compiègne was the Comte d'Artois. Much to the disappointment of the Baron de Vitrolles, he had refused to be accompanied by him, possibly preferring to be alone with the King when he gave the account of his stewardship. No one knows exactly what passed during the interview, as, on his return from Compiègne, he was extremely reserved about the matter even to his confidant Vitrolles, and merely talked about the King's good health. It is believed, however, that, in addition to other criticisms of his brother's conduct of public affairs, the King reproached him bitterly with having assumed the responsibility of deciding that the French garrisons should evacuate the places still held by them in Germany and in Belgium, and that distress at his own mistake and at the King's anger, caused the serious illness from which the Comte d'Artois suffered soon afterwards.

Another visitor who was scarcely treated with the courtesy usually shown by Louis XVIII, was Alexander I of Russia, who came with the object of acting as mediator between the King and Senate, and intended to spend the night at Compiègne. However, he left in disgust when, after being treated with the greatest



From an engraving by Henry Meyer, after a painting by Volkof.

ALEXANDER I,
CZAR OF RUSSIA.

formality by the King, he was conducted through several magnificent suites of rooms, intended, he was told, for Monsieur, the Duc d'Angoulême, and the Duc de Berry, all of whom were absent ; and was afterwards taken up staircases and along corridors, to the very modest suite of rooms he was expected to occupy. When the Russian Minister, Pozzo di Borgo, who had accompanied the Czar, tried to find excuses, and to soften his master's very natural resentment, by pleading that the King's helplessness did not allow him to supervise anything himself, Alexander answered, with a touch of spite, that the Duchesse d'Angoulême appeared sufficiently like a housekeeper to have been able to attend to the allotment of the rooms.¹

The etiquette observed at dinner was even more galling to the Czar's sense of his own dignity, for the King, having asked his guest to take in the Duchesse d'Angoulême, passed on before them, sat in the only armchair at dinner, and was served first.

There was to be no mistake about the fact that the Bourbons took precedence of the upstart Russian rulers, and possibly there lingered in Louis XVIII's mind a recollection of how Alexander had refused him the title of King, and had treated him as a commonplace person of no account ; but policy as well as good feeling, might well have dictated a different behaviour towards the generous defender of French interests.

The Corps Législatif sent to Compiègne a deputation of twenty-five members ; but the Senate held aloof, as they had done at the time of Monsieur's entry into Paris, being reluctant to acknowledge the Bourbons

¹ Boigne, *Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 288.

until after the signing of the contract between the King and the Nation.

On May 2nd the King moved to Saint-Ouen, where the Senate and the members of the Provisional Government—being able to put off their visit no longer—came to pay their respects to him. It was now absolutely necessary for some declaration to be made at once, as the public entry into Paris was announced for the next day. Therefore the celebrated affirmation known as the Declaration of Saint-Ouen, was drawn up in a great hurry by Monsieur de Vitrolles, Monsieur de Blacas, and Monsieur de Maisonfort.

In this the King stated that the Constitution proposed by the Senate was on a good basis ; but that many of the articles had been drawn up in too great a hurry to form fundamental laws of the State. He promised a liberal Constitution, and convoked the Senate and the Corps Législatif for June 10th, to examine the agreement between himself and his people, which was about to be drawn up by a chosen Commission. He went on to say that he promised to preserve the Representative Government, and that, as in Napoleon's time, there would be two Chambers, or, as we should term it, an Upper and a Lower House. Taxes would not be imposed without the consent of the Government, public and individual liberty were assured, the liberty of the Press was promised—necessary precautions, however, being taken for public safety—liberty of religion was guaranteed, property was to be sacred and inviolable, the sale of national property was declared irrevocable, pensions, grades, and military honours were to be conserved, as well as the titles of the old and new nobility, and no one was to be punished for his votes or opinions ; while the

celebrated Legion of Honour was to be maintained as in the late Emperor's time.

The Declaration appeared in the *Moniteur* on the morning of the King's entry into Paris, and every one, except Monsieur de Talleyrand, who considered some of the expressions ambiguous, and was naturally indignant that he had not been consulted about the drawing up of the document, was delighted with it. The famous Charter was indeed only a development of this first Declaration, of which Louis XVIII was always extremely proud, as he considered that it marked an epoch in the history of France.

The feelings of the French people were now attuned to greet the King's entry into Paris with proper enthusiasm, though the glamour and exuberant emotion with which Monsieur had been received had somewhat diminished, and doubts as to future Bourbon policy, as well as a prevision of future difficulties and divisions, had already begun to be felt. Besides, it was easier to feel ardent affection for Monsieur riding his charger, childlike in his happiness, overcome by the force of his joyous sensations, than for an infirm King, who sat helpless in his carriage, and looked tired and indifferent.

Louis XVIII was dressed in a plain blue coat with large epaulettes, had a three-cornered hat on his head, and wore the blue order and the badge of Saint Esprit. He was certainly completely without power of expressing his emotions with spontaneity. He could compose suitable speeches for any occasion which might arise; but the very self-control which was at times invaluable, and which his enemies said was aided by coldness of heart, hindered that naïve expression of passionate feeling which is magnetic in its power over others,

and which, when backed up by other qualities, will raise a man above his fellows, and enable him to dominate the multitude.

On this occasion, however, the Duchesse d'Angoulême was the heroine of the day, and her Uncle wished to show that he was aware of this, so pointed her out continually to the people, as though to make her the centre of enthusiasm ; but his action seemed affected and theatrical, and on a par with his appearance with her later at one of the windows of the Tuileries, when he was seen putting a crown of flowers on her head.¹ However, the sight was greeted with enthusiasm by the crowd beneath.

Madame's dress had caused much dismay when she first landed in France, as French and English fashions were then absolutely dissimilar ; and her close hat and scanty frock looked extraordinary beside the flowing feathers, puffs, and huge toques worn by the Parisian ladies. It had been very difficult to persuade her to alter her costume, even for this grand occasion ; but a council of ladies had discussed the matter, and had sent her to Saint-Ouen a feather toque of the orthodox shape, a ruffle, and a robe embroidered in silver.

The ceremony of a public entry was to Madame a terrible ordeal, for recollections and associations of horror pressed upon her. The populace, who now decked their houses with white flags, wore the white cockade, and assembled in crowds on the pavements to cheer and cry "Vive le Roi!" was the same that had besieged Versailles, perpetrated the abominations of August 10th, and had shouted insults to Marie Antoinette on her way to the scaffold. Therefore the

¹ *Frénilly Mémoires*, p. 355.

Princess sat beside her Uncle with red eyes, not seeing the present for the thronging memories of the past, and looking stiff and constrained in the fashionable garments, to which she had somehow managed to impart a foreign look.

When the procession reached Notre-Dame, and the Royal party went into the church for the King to receive the holy water and to hear the *Te Deum*, the Princess sank in tears on her prie-dieu; and on her arrival at the Tuileries she nearly fainted, and was unable to receive the ladies who had come to offer her baskets of flowers.

There were others in the procession to whom this day was a terrible ragedy—a commemoration of the fact that their day was over for ever. Lining the street from the Pont-Neuf to Notre-Dame were the Old Imperial Guard, while a detachment of grenadiers from the same body marched behind the King's carriage. It had been intended in this manner to show the Guard special honour; but, to any close observer, its aspect was ominous.

“It marched quickly,”¹ says Madame de Boigne; “silent and gloomy, full of remembrances of the past. It stopped, by a look, our outbursts of affection for those who were arriving. The shouts of ‘Long live the King!’ died on our lips as it rode by. Here and there were heard shouts of ‘Long live the Guard!’ ‘Long live the Old Guard!’ But it did not welcome these, and appeared to accept them in derision. As it passed by the silence became general, and soon nothing could be heard but the monotonous tramp of the quick-step striking our very hearts. The consternation increased, and the contagious sadness of these old

¹ *Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 292.

warriors gave to the whole ceremony the appearance of the Emperor's funeral rather than that of the King's accession."

Thus, with the mingled joy and suffering which must attend any great national change, was the Restoration of the Bourbon Family accomplished, and Louis XVIII returned to the throne of his fathers.

CHAPTER XII

The King's Councils—The Ministry—The Charter—The Treaty of Paris—Ceremony of the Reading of the Charter—Difficulties and mistakes—The ultra-Royalists—The Jacobins—The Imperialists—French society—The “Maison du Roi”—The Army—Discontent and danger—Talleyrand at the Congress of Vienna—The King's foreign policy.

THE Restoration accomplished, two most important matters occupied general attention—the question of the amount of territory which the Allies would allow France to retain, and of the measure of liberty which the King would accord to his subjects in the promised Charter.

Meanwhile, Councils were held and presided over by the King, or rather “listened to” by him. “Our monarchical instincts,” says Monsieur de Vitrolles, “refused to qualify him as President. Louis XIV listened to his Council, he did not preside over it!”¹ At any rate, however, the knotty point between “presiding” and “listening” may be settled, the King was always present at the Council, and sat at the head of the table, the members, except the Princes, being provided with the stools without backs known as “pliants.” The King won much approval in his conduct of his first Council, as the glance round the table, in which he included every one, was kindly, yet full of dignity, and when he spoke

¹ *Vitrolles Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 41.

his words were well chosen and his voice full and sonorous.

The Ministry was quickly formed. The post of Chancellor of France, which conferred the presidency of the Royal Council and the direction of the Department of Justice, was re-established, and was given to Monsieur Dambray, who before the Revolution had made himself a great reputation as lawyer, but who had since retired into private life, and had lost touch with the new transmogrified France. To Talleyrand was confided the post of Foreign Minister, an appointment which it was impossible to prevent, though it was no doubt bestowed with reluctance ; while—as if to counterpoise his influence—the Abbé de Montesquiou, a man essentially of the Ancien Régime, but honest and disinterested, “who had been unshakably faithful to his cause, his class, his friends, his master,”¹ was persuaded, much against his will, to become Minister of the Interior, and Blacas was called to the head of the “Maison du Roi,” and was the King’s confidential adviser on everything. Another appointment in this short-lived Ministry was that of the witty, though maladroit, Comte Beugnot to the Directorship of the Police ; while Baron Louis, who possessed much ability and public spirit and had served under Napoleon, remained in charge of the finances. General Dupont, also an Imperialist, still held the post of Minister of War, and Baron Malouet, who had been a member of the Assemblée Constituante, kept the charge of the Navy.

Many dangers had been avoided in forming this Ministry, and the King had carefully excluded Monsieur’s favourites from it ; but it was a strangely

¹ *Guizot Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 38.

heterogeneous set of men, absolutely opposed to each other in sentiments, views, and experiences, who were set the task of forming a new and united France.

Monsieur, in spite of possessing no official position, had a considerable voice in the Government. "The King has received a list from M. le duc de Feltre, and has said that he will think about it at leisure; whenever the King thinks at leisure, Monsieur thinks with him,"¹ says one of the Ministers.

The Ministry was not like our modern English views of similar institutions, for the members of it were almost entirely independent of each other, and each head of a department submitted his work separately to the King.

Therefore, if a Minister promulgated a law which was viewed with disfavour by the nation—when, for instance, Comte Beugnot, as head of the police, passed a measure stopping all business on Sundays and feast-days—the other members of the Ministry disclaimed responsibility for the unpopular edict. This want of unity in the Ministry militated against its weight with the country, and was a cause of much weakness and vacillation in the Government.

It also invested each individual Minister with enormous responsibility, for Louis XVIII was not sufficiently strong, either mentally or physically, to undertake the extraordinary amount of work which Napoleon had taken upon his shoulders, and to have the affairs of each department submitted to him. Therefore, certain of the Ministers who had been accustomed to work with the Emperor and to present him with abstracts of the affairs in hand, found it difficult

¹ Jaucourt to Talleyrand, *Talleyrand et Louis XVIII Correspondance*. Note to p. 412.

to accommodate their arrangements to a ruler who did not care to be troubled with detail. Comte Beugnot, the Director of Police, who had watched with dismay the impatience and boredom with which his Majesty listened to his reports, tells us that he related his troubles to his colleague, l'Abbé Louis, who laughed heartily. "What," he said, "did you not notice from the first day, from the first bit of business, that you were boring the King to death? Besides, what is the use of making reports to him? You might as well make them to a saint in his niche. For my part I present him the ordinances to sign, and he never refuses one. Only, as it takes him a long time to sign his name, while he works at that, I tell him a little about the affair. I do not bore him; it is he who bores me, because he is so long in making his signature."¹

It was at one of the Councils of his Ministers, that the King made the gracious remark which has since become an axiom. The Ministers had assembled as usual in the anteroom, and had become so much interested in their conversation that they did not remember how time was going, and entered the council-chamber rather late, to find the King already waiting. The Chancellor, Monsieur Dambray, began to make rather confused excuses, and finished them with an eulogy of the King's punctuality.

"Messieurs," answered his Majesty, "including us all in one of the caressing glances of which he alone knew the secret," "punctuality is the politeness of kings."²

When the Charter had been promulgated, the government was complicated, and the Ministry further

¹ *Beugnot Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 160.

² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

weakened, by the establishment of two Councils with different functions—the “*Conseil d'en Haut*,” which consisted of the Princes, the Chancellor, and any Ministers who might be summoned to it, and the “*Conseil d'État*,” which contained the heads of the departments.

In one thing the King showed wisdom ; it was in vain that the ardent Royalists implored him to bring forward some statement of his future policy. He intended to wait on circumstances ; though it is evident that behind this opportunism was the determination to feel his way cautiously towards obtaining as much power as was practicable. He was most careful, however, that the direction of his wishes should not be apparent ; and even Monsieur's friend Monsieur de Vitrolles, who found the King's personality, unlike that of his brother, interestingly mysterious, could not fathom the depths of his mind. The King's limitations no doubt aided this judicious reticence ; it was not possible for him to inspire, to lead, to be a ruler of men ; his rôle was to temporise, to avoid pitfalls, to prevent mistakes, to show his sagacity rather in preventing mischief than in initiating a policy of his own.

So much work lay ready to his hand at this time, that he might well be excused for refusing to enter into the region of speculative politics. The drawing up of the promised Charter was now of the highest importance, for the newspapers were full of contradictory reports, suggestions, and rumours, and these were rapidly raising public excitement to fever-pitch.

Therefore on May 18th, 1814, the King, after discussing the matter with Montesquiou, with Beugnot, and no doubt also with Blacas, named a Commission, composed of members chosen by him out of the Senate

and the Corps Législatif, who, aided by the three Ministers, Montesquiou, Beugnot, and Ferrand, and presided over by the Chancellor, Dambray, were entrusted with the task of drawing up the Charter of the Constitution. This plan did not please every one, as it did not altogether tally with the Declaration of Saint-Ouen, which had appeared to promise that the Charter should be submitted to the discussion and vote of the Senate and the Corps Législatif collectively. Talleyrand, in particular, must have disapproved of the scheme, for Louis XVIII, still afraid of his preponderating influence, did not consult him about the choice of the Commission, and ordered Beugnot not to tell the Minister for Foreign Affairs anything which passed at the deliberations.

These were many in number, and it only seems necessary to give a summary of the principal provisions of the Charter as finally modified, and accepted by Louis XVIII.

The first articles dealt with the "Public Rights of Frenchmen," which comprised equality before the law, individual liberty, and liberty in religious matters, while the Roman Catholic religion was declared to be the State religion; also liberty of the Press with repression of abuses; and inviolability of property, even that known as national; though the State arrogated to itself the power of taking over a property if necessary in the public interest; but in this case suitable compensation must always be granted. Next to the declaration of rights came the "King's forms of Government." There were to be two Chambers—the "Chambre des Pairs" (Chamber of Peers), which took the place of Napoleon's Senate, and the "Chambre des Députés" (Chamber of Deputies), which was

really his Corps Législatif under another name. The members of the Chamber of Peers were nominated by the King, either for life or with hereditary descent, and their number was unlimited. Their deliberations were to be secret. Royal Princes were to have a right to attend these on receiving a permission from the King, which was to be renewed each Session.

The members of the Chamber of Deputies were to be elected by the electoral colleges for five years, and a fifth of the Chamber was to be re-elected every year, so that a General Election was never to take place. Each deputy must be forty years of age, and must pay a yearly direct taxation of 1,000 francs, while the electors must be thirty years old or over, and must pay 300 francs in taxation yearly.

In theory the King was to propose all laws, though the two Chambers acting together might beg him to propose a law on a given subject; but if he were to refuse to sanction their request, the question must be dropped till the end of the Session.

The question of conscription was difficult. Its abolition had been one of the first Bourbon promises; yet without it there seemed no possibility of providing a sufficient Army. Therefore, against the wishes of the Duc d'Angoulême, the mode of recruiting both for the Army and the Navy was left to be decided at some future date.

Article 14, which declared among the attributions of Royalty, the right "of making regulations and ordinances necessary for the execution of the laws and the safety of the State," acquired a sad celebrity sixteen years later, when, under its cover, Monsieur, then Charles X, made himself practically Dictator, and lost the throne in consequence.

Meanwhile, Talleyrand had been engaged in consultations with the four great Allied Powers, and these resulted on May 30th in the signing of the Treaty of Paris. By this treaty France, with small additions, resumed her boundaries as in the year 1792, and recovered nearly all the colonial possessions which had been taken from her during the war.

It was also settled that all the Powers should send plenipotentiaries to a Congress which was to be held at Vienna in the autumn.

It was necessary to hurry through the later consultations on the Charter, as the Sovereigns, having signed the Treaty of Paris, were determined to leave Paris at once; while the Emperor Alexander, discontented with Louis XVIII's reluctance to form a close alliance with him, and distrustful of Bourbon promises, was quite resolved not to go before France had been granted constitutional government.

Nevertheless, as it was thought politic that the iron hand should be very thoroughly concealed by the glove, it was settled that the Powers should evacuate Paris before the Assembly at which the King was to inaugurate constitutional government. Therefore, the foreign armies marched out of Paris on June 2nd and 3rd, and their posts were occupied by the Garde Nationale. Only the Sovereigns remained, and were present when, on June 4th, 1814, the King, accompanied by the Princes of his family and the chief dignitaries of Court and State, went in state to the Palais-Bourbon, the former meeting-place of the Corps Législatif, where the Chamber of Deputies was in the future to hold its sittings.

It was a memorable occasion, and the presence of the friendly Sovereigns, who sat with the Royal Family

in a richly decorated gallery, made it unique ; while the vast amphitheatre was thronged with the most distinguished and most elegant people in France.

A magnificent throne had been placed for the King on the platform usually occupied by the President of the Assembly, and from there he repeated, in a strong, clear voice, the speech which he had himself drawn up, and in which he touched with tact and discretion on the most difficult point in the agreement, that of the conquests which France had been forced to abandon.

“Sirs,” he said, “when, for the first time, I come within these precincts, surrounded by the great bodies of the State, and the representatives of a nation which never ceases to offer me the most touching tokens of her love, I congratulate myself in becoming the dispenser of the benefits which divine Providence deigns to accord to my people. I have concluded a peace with Russia, Austria, England, and Prussia, in which all their Allies, that is to say, all the Princes of Christendom, are included. War was universal, so is reconciliation. The rank which France has always held among the nations, has not been transferred elsewhere, but has remained undividedly hers. Whatever security the other States acquire increases hers also, and in consequence adds to her true power. What she does not retain of her conquests, must not be considered as deducted from her real strength. The glory of the French armies has received no injury ; the monuments of their valour remain, and the chefs-d’œuvres of art belong to us henceforth by more durable and sacred rights than those of victory. The channels of commerce, so long closed, will be free. The markets of France will no longer be open only to the productions of her own

soil and of her own industry ; those which custom has led her to want, or which are necessary to the arts she exercises, will be supplied to her by the possessions she recovers ; she will no longer be forced either to do without them or only to obtain them at ruinous prices. Our manufactures will again flourish, our maritime towns will revive, and everything assures us that permanent calm abroad, and durable happiness at home, will be the happy results of the peace. A sad recollection comes continually to trouble my joy. I was born, I hoped to remain all my life the most faithful subject of the best of Kings, and to-day I occupy his place ! But at least he is not altogether dead ; he lives again in this Will, which he intended for the instruction of the august and unfortunate child whom I was destined to succeed ! It is with my eyes fixed on this immortal work, full of the sentiments which dictated it, guided by the experience and helped by the advice of some among you, that I have drawn up the constitutional Charter which you will hear read, and which is founded on the solid base of the prosperity of the State. My Chancellor will explain to you with more detail my paternal intentions."

This speech was greeted with much applause, which was certainly merited, but the next discourse was unfortunate, and was received with murmurs ; for the Chancellor insisted on the fact that Royalty had lost none of the authority it had possessed under the Ancien Régime, and spoke of the Charter as an "ordinance of reformation." Monsieur Ferrand, who followed, and to whom the reading of the Charter had been entrusted, read in a voice enfeebled by illness a preamble which had been composed by Monsieur

Beugnot, and in the press of business had not apparently been submitted to the King; and this was also on the lines of connecting the past with the present, and of clinging as far as possible to the spirit of that Ancien Régime which most Frenchmen wished to leave behind for ever. Doubtful silence greeted this preamble, but the reading of the Charter itself was acclaimed with enthusiasm, and every one felt that at last a new era had dawned in France—that of constitutional and representative government.

It was a brilliant beginning; but terrible difficulties beset the way. Some of these had their origin in the facts of Louis XVIII's history. The ideal King of France at the time of the Restoration should have had no past. Free, and untrammelled by tradition, bound to no party, his desires centred merely on the art of soothing distracted and disunited France, and of persuading the parties who hated, feared, and distrusted each other, to work together, he might have accomplished much which was impossible to Louis XVIII, whose scheming during the Emigration had not only indebted him to many people, but had prejudiced many against him.

Ineffaceable were the debts the King owed to the Vendéans and Chouans, who had shed their blood for his cause, and they intended to profit by his return. Monsieur de Barante, writing on May 16, 1814, says: "In Vendée, the peasants, I do not know why, will not pay taxes, and imagine that the return of the Bourbons exempts them from the general application of the laws."¹ It was partly to recompense some of the Vendéan and Chouan nobility, though also because, in his intense love for ceremonial, he wished to revive the

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 64.

magnificent etiquette of the Ancien Régime, that the King established not only his "Maison Civile," with its many hereditary posts, "Grand Master," "Grand Almoner," and the like, but also his "Maison Militaire," with its "Bodyguard," whose office it was to guard the interior of the Royal residences, and to accompany the King and Princes everywhere. The grades of these officers did not answer to their rank in the ordinary Army; they were a privileged body, and were chosen mostly from amongst poor country gentlemen. From the first their appointment caused bitter indignation in the regular Army, and there was a fight in the streets when they went to guard the posts hitherto held by the Garde Nationale. However, it would have seemed the basest ingratitude and heartlessness, for the King to show no recognition of the services of the gallant men who had received instructions and encouragement from him in fighting for his cause. He was hampered and embarrassed by his past.

On the other hand, even if he had shown masterly inactivity and dignified resignation during his exile, he would nevertheless have been compromised by his lineage, and all those who had fought for the Bourbon cause would still have considered that he owed them a debt of gratitude.

As it was, the King and each of the Ministers were deluged with petitions from ambitious Royalists, who had little or no reason on which to base their claim except the fact that they *were* Royalists, and as such entitled to Royal bounty. At one of the sittings of the Council, the Head of the Admiralty brought a letter for consideration which he had received from a Royalist who had been a naval cadet in 1789, but

had left the Service because of the Revolution, an action which, he remarked, could not be imputed to him as a crime, and he calculated—not allowing, he pointed out, for extraordinary promotion—that, had he remained in the Navy, he would by now be Rear-Admiral, and therefore claimed that rank from his Majesty.

The King appeared to be annoyed by this demand ; and, encouraged by the Royal attitude, those Ministers who did not rejoice in pasts of unsullied Royalist purity showed an inclination to unkind jesting—not to say bitterness—on the subject of ultra-Royalist pretensions.

“ But what can I answer ? ” asked the much worried Head of the Admiralty.

“ It seems to me, Sir, ” answered Vitrolles, who tells the story, “ that you may perfectly allow all this gentleman’s logic, and even the consequences he has deduced from it, while adding that he has only forgotten one essential fact—that he was killed at the battle of Trafalgar ! ”¹

Even the King became amused at the extraordinary petitions preferred by some of the Émigrés, but it was only after the lesson taught him by Napoleon’s successful return to France, that he realised the great danger their unreasonable ambitions and prejudices were to the Monarchy. When Napoleon announced at the beginning of the Hundred Days, that he was in reality wresting the kingdom from the Duc d’Orléans he spoke the truth, for the Government of the first Restoration was so weak, and showed such ignorance of the condition and feelings of the country, that it could not possibly have lasted ; and it was

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. ii. p. 224.

fortunate for the Bourbon cause that the violent interruption to its wavering course came from a quarter where it could not be tolerated by the Great Powers; for if France had in disgust turned to the Duc d'Orléans, Europe would in all probability have abstained from interference.

Yet, by the irony of fate, Louis XVIII was not loved by the party for whom he seemed to be on the point of ruining himself. He was still not "pure in his politics," still the "greatest Jacobin in Europe," and the *Émigrés* were profoundly dissatisfied with his policy. At the Restoration "nothing was changed, renovated, made, or unmade. France was taken as it was, ready-made by Napoleon," says Frénilly, true type of the ultra-Royalist. A little lower on the same page he remarks bitterly, "It is according the King full justice to say that he did not himself wish to change anything that had been done by the Revolution, and that we did him wrong when for a long time we persisted in the idea that he thought with us, though his actions were in opposition to us."¹ Therefore Louis XVIII—after a twenty-three years' exile from his country, be it remembered—managed to please no one.

Certainly it would have been impossible for any one to govern the nation successfully, and to satisfy the ultra-Royalists. For one thing they were hardly Royalists at all, if Royalism means personal devotion to the Sovereign. Most of the *Émigrés* who had fought in Condé's army or worked for a living in the different capitals of Europe, had long ago returned to France, and a new generation had grown up, who kept the Royalist feasts and commemoration services

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Frénilly*, p. 355.

devoutly, and had heard of the "Orphan of the Temple," but who had before the Restoration the vaguest ideas about Louis XVIII and the Comte d'Artois, and of their relationship to the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berry. Therefore a feeling was absent which might have rallied them to the help of the throne in its difficult struggle. It must be allowed, however, that the sentiment would have indeed been strong, which could have caused them to regard with complacency a Government which did not at once dispossess the aggressors who had seized their property.

The ultra-Royalists who had returned to France before the Restoration, had formed that stronghold of aristocratic tradition and Court sentiment known as the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which is in reality more an institution than a place ; for, as Balzac says, "the whole of the faubourg is not in the faubourg. Persons born far from its influence feel it, and affiliate themselves with its spirit, while others, born in its purple, are by nature banished from it."¹ There they had lived apart, sighing for the Restoration of the Monarchy. It took place ; and except for the re-establishment of the "Maison du Roi," nothing seemed to be altered. It was indeed a terrible disappointment to discover that they had not conquered with the King ; that while he had come again into his rights they were still excluded from theirs ; and they did not see that, in the words of Balzac, "institutions reach climacteric years, when terms no longer have their past meaning, when ideas clothe themselves in new garments, when the conditions of political life change without any essential change in their being."² Therefore, after battling for a time against the inevitable,

¹ *Duchesse de Langeais*.

² *Ibid.*

and nearly upsetting the throne in their struggle, they retired from the strife, soiled their delicate fingers no longer with political affairs, and, refusing to do their work in the nation, became of no account.

It is untrue, however, to say that it was at the time of the Restoration that the French nobility, of course with brilliant exceptions, cut themselves off from national life. Louis XIV had done that for them when he made it their duty to encircle him in the great artificial system of Versailles, to which the Faubourg Saint-Germain was the natural sequence. But power, authority, and place had now passed from a caste to nourish the life of a great nation, from which it was divided by so wide a gulf, that a high-born foreigner was more in sympathy with an ultra-Royalist of the upper class, than was a bourgeois.

The hostility felt by the ultra-Royalists to their native country, which refused to recognise the privileges to which they considered themselves entitled, but for which they refused to pay the price of service, made it most dangerous for the King to show any favouritism towards them; and the situation was rendered intensely difficult by the fact that the Comte d'Artois—whom the King as he grew older found it increasingly difficult to withstand—tried to bring them into prominence on all occasions.

The other extreme parties in the State were prepared to be conciliatory. Jacobinism, which had been stirred by terror and indignation at the idea of possible reprisals on the part of the Bourbon Government, to a condition in which it would have been quite capable of repeating on a small scale the atrocities of the Terror, had now quieted down, and hid its head, ashamed of the horror felt for its late excesses—a horror which at the time

of the Restoration, when the great upheaval of the Revolution was too close for a correct perspective to be obtained, blotted out all conception of the benefits it had conferred on the nation.

Imperialism, at any rate Imperialism in high places, was almost servilely anxious to conciliate the new Government; it even welcomed it. "My dear, it is only now that I feel I am really a Countess!" wrote a lady whose husband had been ennobled by Napoleon.

However, difficulties soon arose between the new nobility and the old, and members of the latter often prided themselves on the hauteur with which they treated Napoleon's upstart nobility. Monsieur de Poix said to the Prince of Neufchâtel, addressing him as Berthier, "Yet as the result of the Revolution, here you are, as great a person as myself!"¹ while an old duke, after talking for a long time to the Maréchal Ney, remarked in a tone of caressing compassion, "What a pity that you have not, like one of us, what can never be given."²

The caustic Madame de Boigne expresses very well the feelings of the great ladies of the Ancien Régime when she says, "We showed great affability to the ladies of the Empire. They were hurt at our advances in a place where they were accustomed to reign exclusively, and they considered us impertinent. As soon as they felt themselves no more alone they considered themselves paramount, an excusable impression. We meant very well; we were too well satisfied not to feel sincerely kind. But there is a certain ease, a certain freedom in the manner of women of good

¹ *Mémoires de Madame de Chastenay*, vol. ii. p. 424.

² *Viel Castel Restoration*, vol. ii. p. 95.

society which gives them the appearance of being at home everywhere, and of doing the honours wherever they may be. Women of the other class are often shocked at this, consequently the pettinesses and the little jealousies of the bourgeois were stirred beneath the jewels which adorned their breasts.”¹

The ladies of the Empire may have been unduly sensitive, but they certainly must have had a good deal to bear ; and these disagreeables were increased by an unfortunate regulation which was intended to conciliate the great nobles of the Empire, but which raised a violent storm among the ladies of the Ancien Régime. The King, advised by the Duc de Duras, decreed that at Royal receptions the duchesses were to be elevated into a separate caste, and were to pass on at once to the brilliantly lit throne-room, leaving the other ladies in the semi-obscurity of the Salon de la Paix. “The faces of the former Court ladies were worth seeing each time that one of the fortunate women of the new régime crossed the Salon de la Paix, as it were, over their bodies,”² says Madame de Boigne.

In the throne-room, the King went the round of the duchesses, and afterwards stood or sat, as his health allowed, in front of the chimney-piece, while the other ladies passed on in single file, and each made him a deep curtsy. To one out of about every ten he said two or three sentences, closing the interview with a slight inclination of the head, to which the lady addressed replied by another deep curtsy.

Madame, to whom the stream of ladies next made their way, said more to each person, and, but for her

¹ *Mémoires de Madame de Boigne*, vol. i. p. 284.

² *Ibid.*

brusque manner, the roughness of her voice, and her lack of tact and grace, she might have become a favourite. The Duc d'Angoulême, whose common exterior militated much against his popularity, received every one with embarrassed fussiness, and the Duc de Berry greeted his guests with the utmost cordiality and good-humour, though with a total absence of dignity.

The Comte d'Artois and his younger son occupied the part of the Tuileries known as the Pavillon Marsan, a name which, owing to Monsieur's policy, had already become synonymous with reaction, and with ultra-Royalist manœuvring. Monsieur was as perfectly fitted to shine at Court functions as he had been in his youth, and received even the Imperialist ladies with charming grace. However, his mistakes outside the Court and in the sight of the country at large were flagrant. For instance, he caused general indignation and alarm among the moderate constitutionals, who now formed the bulk of the nation, by refusing when travelling to be served at Mass by orthodox priests of irreproachable character, if they had formerly taken the oath to the civil constitution of the clergy.

His violent policy redounded most injuriously upon Louis XVIII, whose infirmities did not allow him to become known by the people generally; and the fear of priesthood and superstition which had been started by Beugnot's injudicious ordinance on the keeping of Sunday, was increased by the many memorial services with processions of the clergy which had been held for different members of the Royal Family, and for those who had died for the Bourbon cause, and was exploited by some of Napoleon's agents, who increased

the general alarm by travelling through the provinces in the garb of Trappist monks.¹

Apparently none of the symptoms of disorder throughout the country disturbed Louis XVIII's composure. "As for me, it would be possible for me not to enjoy a moment of repose," he writes on December 4, 1814, "and yet my sleep is as peaceful as it was in my youth. The reason of this is simple; I have always believed that once the first moments of the Restoration were over, the mixture of so many heterogeneous elements would produce fermentation. I know that it exists, but I do not disturb myself about it."²

This was philosophy indeed; for any impartial observer would have found much cause for alarm in the general disaffection, and especially in the discontented and mutinous condition of the Army. According to the Duke of Wellington, the King was driven from the throne because he never had the real command over it, and therefore "even if the trivial faults or even follies of his civil administration had not been committed, I believe the same results would have been produced."

The establishment of the military "Maison du Roi," in which each soldier was an officer, the infesting of every regiment with Émigrés, the existence of "privileged bodies," where honours were showered on young men who had just left school, while "well-trying and excellent officers, bent with the weight of years, and covered with honourable scars, vegetated on half pay, unknown and almost despised by the new-comers";³

¹ *Chastenay Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 469.

² *Correspondance inédite de Louis XVIII et de Talleyrand*.

³ *Souvenirs du Maréchal Macdonald*, p. 325.

these and other foolish measures were causing intense indignation among the tried troops who had fought for Napoleon.

While doing all he could to attach the Marshals to the Bourbon cause, Louis XVIII had not sufficiently realised the fact that the soldier had now become a person of independent opinions, who could no longer be depended on to obey the commands of his superior officer with unquestioning docility. Napoleon's policy had been that of raising the private to a position of prominence, and of winning his affection; and in his famous Imperial Guard, while the officers were often changed, and were never people who would be likely to be strong enough to be dangerous, the soldiers were caressed and flattered; and worshipped "le Petit Caporal," who was their comrade as well as their Emperor. The profuse distribution of the Legion of Honour during the tours made by the Princes, was a grievous mistake; for it caused the most bitter indignation among men whose most precious possession it was, and who had gained it by some noble action in which they had risked their lives.

There was fury in military circles, when the Duc de Berry gave it to the husband of some one with whom he had danced at Lille, merely because she asked for it. Rightly or wrongly it was supposed that the Bourbon Princes wished to degrade the decoration instituted by Napoleon, as well as the holders of it.

Besides these blunders and stupidities, however, dissatisfaction in the Army was caused by much which it was completely out of the King's power to rectify. France was no longer a purely military State; the days of conquest were over, and the Army had therefore ceased to be a career which offered a perspective of

extraordinary promotions, honours, and wealth. In Napoleon's time a sanguinary engagement was welcomed as offering brilliant prospects to the survivors. "They did not kill any captains ; the lieutenants were not pleased,"¹ said a young officer with perfect seriousness when giving an account of a battle.

Therefore, numberless castles in the air faded to nothing at the announcement of a permanent peace ; and hundreds of discontented, and sometimes almost starving men, cursed the Bourbon Government, and longed for Napoleon. The official letters of the Head of the Police are full of disquieting reports about the military discontent, reports, however, which seem to have received scant attention from the Government, who no doubt felt unequal to the terribly difficult problem of dealing with the Army.

At Strasburg, a caricature of Napoleon was shown in a shop with an account of his crimes—this was an imprudence which was often committed. An officer rushed in and cut it up with his sword ; and when next day *Le Retour des Lys* was played at the theatre, there were military disturbances. At Saint-Étienne, the King's bust was removed to be surrounded with the arms of France, and great joy was expressed at the hope of Napoleon's return ; and the officers of a garrison sent from Paris to Dôle poured imprecations on a portrait of the King. Such were the warnings from all parts of the country. Everywhere were "outbursts of vague and impotent discontent, the language of boredom and of bad temper."²

Unfortunately these outbursts were not long to remain impotent expressions of feeling, for the master

¹ *Mémoires de Madame de Chastenay*, vol. ii. p. 391.

² *Rapports du Comte Anglès*, p. 46.

hand would soon apply a torch to the combustible matter, which was, however, almost ready to ignite by itself. The Duke of Wellington, now English Ambassador in France, wrote to his Government that each night he expected a catastrophe; and the most alarming reports were in circulation. One of these was to the effect that on the way to a performance at the Odéon, the King and all the Princes were to be carried off by some of the generals. The Maréchal Marmont, with two other generals and Monsieur Beugnot, went to warn Louis XVIII of this, and to beg him not to leave the Palace. "The King, however, with the calmness which gave such a beautiful character to his noble physiognomy, told them that nothing should prevent him from appearing at the theatre as had been announced; that he had for too long been ready to sacrifice his life to be made anxious, and that he confided to their devotion and prudence the precautions which the news would require."¹

Nothing happened; and the King listened to the performance with every appearance of interest, though he occasionally directed a glance of smiling intelligence towards his niece, who at first looked troubled, but began later to gain confidence from her Uncle's equanimity.

Louis XVIII had not been a year on the throne, and already his enemies were busily at work. Scurrilous pamphlets, one of which connected his name with that of Robespierre, and accused him of instigating the worst excesses of the Revolution, even of contriving the executions of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and Madame Elizabeth, were in secret circulation.

Fouché, the Duc d'Otrante, had quicky seen which

¹ *Chastenay Mémoires*, p. 422.

way the wind was blowing ; and though he was trying as usual to keep on friendly terms with all the contending parties, he was preparing if necessary to leave the sinking ship, and was plotting for the downfall of the Bourbons.

On one thing only could the King rightly congratulate himself: his foreign policy was thoroughly successful. On his first arrival at Vienna for the Congress of the European nations, Talleyrand had found great difficulties in his way, as the four Great Powers—England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia—wished to designate themselves the Allies, and to discuss, without consulting France, the question of the nationality of the various territories which had been taken from her at the Treaty of Paris.

There is no doubt that Talleyrand's diplomacy at Vienna showed the utmost skill ; but probably sufficient credit has not been given to Louis XVIII for the firmness with which he supported his Minister in his policy, and for the determination with which he insisted that France must not submit to humiliation. Though he was a man of peace, who knew nothing of military matters, he was quite prepared to fight with the object of keeping up the national prestige ; indeed, in spite of his apparent equanimity about the internal condition of France, he may possibly have felt that war would be the only condition which would weld the discordant elements into unity.

In a letter written to Talleyrand on October 21st, 1814, after remarking that the Allies wish to avenge themselves on France for what they have suffered from Napoleon, that he will never permit this, and will adopt the plan suggested by Talleyrand, of a Declaration to the effect that the Congress must include France,

he continues: "But this is not all; we must show that there is something behind; and for this it seems to me necessary to make preparations to put the Army on a more considerable footing than it is on now."¹ Elsewhere he states: "I am determined above everything to keep the honour of France intact. . . . I wish also (and this is no less necessary) to have my personal character respected. . . . My life, my crown, are nothing to me beside such great interests."²

The King was firm, too, in his protection of Saxony and of the Bourbons in Italy, as well as in his objection to a Russian alliance, an objection which may have been partly caused by the personal aversion he undoubtedly felt for the Emperor Alexander.

Eventually Talleyrand not only insisted on including France in the Congress, but as her representative became the preponderating member of it; and in defiance of French national feeling, which always inclined to friendship with Russia, a secret alliance was formed between France, Austria, and England. Therefore, during the first days of the Restoration, after France had been completely beaten in the Napoleonic Wars, and when her home Government was weak and without proper consistency, her reputation and influence in the Councils of Europe were as great as they had been in her most palmy days. Much of this ascendancy was no doubt owing to M. de Talleyrand's skill, but no one can, I think, read Louis XVIII's letters to his Minister, without being struck by the fact that his sagacity and firmness counted for a good deal in the diplomatic triumphs of France at the Congress of Vienna.

¹ *Correspondance de Talleyrand et de Louis XVIII*, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

CHAPTER XIII

News of Napoleon's landing arrives in France—Preparations for defence—The Duc d'Orléans—The King's attitude—Ney's defection—Blacas—Contradictory suggestions—Last efforts at rousing loyalty—King's flight from Paris—The Duc and Duchesse d'Angoulême—King's journey: Abbeville, St.-Pol, Béthune, Lille—Failure of the troops of the Maison du Roi—Disaffection of the Army—Lyons—Ghent—Life there—The King's Ministers—the King's attitude—Monsieur's attitude—Attitude of the Congress of Vienna—Advice to the King from the Duc d'Orléans, from Talleyrand, and from Guizot.

ON March 5th, 1815, while the Baron de Vitrolles was interviewing General Beurnonville in his private room, he was told that Monsieur Chappe, the Director of the Telegraph Department of the Post Office, wished to speak to him at once. Chappe was admitted; and entered hot, out of breath, and evidently in a great state of excitement, with a sealed telegram in his hand. The General retired out of hearing, and, in the words of Vitrolles:¹

“I looked for you in your bureau at the Tuileries,” said Chappe to me in a low voice; “and, not finding you there, I wanted to give this telegram at once to the King, but I was sent to you.”

“Of course,” I answered. “Is not that always done?”

“Certainly, certainly! But this is of such pressing importance.”

“But what news does it contain?”

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. ii. p. 283.

He remembered suddenly that he ought not to know, and that only the transcriber should be let into the secret.

"I do not know," he said; "but the transcriber told me that it was most important."

Vitrolles wondered whether some accident had happened to the Duc and Duchesse d'Angoulême in their journey to Bordeaux; and as the news contained in the telegram was not likely to be agreeable, he decided that he would hand it unopened to the King.

"I went at once," says Vitrolles. "Going in to the King I told him that Chappe's excitement, and the importance he seemed to attach to this telegram, had made me think that I had better leave the King to open it. The gout, at this time, had crippled his hands rather badly; he tore apart the seal awkwardly, and taking hold as best he could of the telegram in its envelope, he held it out for me to draw the envelope away from it. I turned slowly to throw the paper into the fireplace behind me; then, standing again behind the table and opposite the King, I waited during the time that it took him to read the two or three lines which composed it. He remained with his eyes fixed on the paper much longer than was necessary for reading it; then he threw it on the table.

"You do not know what it contains?" he said.

"No, Sire, I do not know."

"It is to say," he answered in a voice which had not altered, "that Bonaparte has landed on the coast of Provence."

Thus arrived the great news of Napoleon's desperate attempt to reseal himself on the throne of France. It was necessary that measures for defence should be

taken at once, and it was therefore settled that Monsieur should start the next day for Lyons, where, seconded by Maréchal Macdonald and accompanied by the Duc d'Orléans, he should march towards the enemy; meanwhile the Duc d'Angoulême was to assemble troops in Languedoc, and the Duc de Berry would take command of the garrisons of Lorraine and of Alsace, so that Monsieur would be supported both on the right and on the left.

Whether or no the King knew of the plot formed by Fouché, by which, after having been asked to subscribe to certain conditions which it was thought he must certainly refuse, he and his family were to be turned out of Paris and the Duc d'Orléans made King in his stead, he was sagacious enough to realise that the Orleans danger was almost more serious to the elder branch of the Bourbon Family, than was Napoleon's attempt to reinstate himself as Master of France. He was, therefore, determined to keep his cousin under supervision, and in at least apparent unity with his own cause; and he sent Blacas to him at eleven o'clock that night. The Duc d'Orléans was in the drawing-room, but came out to the antechamber to speak to the King's messenger, who said mysteriously and in a low voice:

“The King wishes to see Monseigneur at once.”

“I will put on my uniform and go to the King,” answered the Duke.

“No,” said Blacas, “that is not necessary. The King wants to see you just as you are; and if you will allow it, I am to have the honour of taking you in my carriage.”

“What!” cried the Duke, “a frock coat at the Tuileries! That will indeed cause gossip in Paris.”

"That does not matter," answered Blacas.¹

The emergency was indeed serious which would cause Louis XVIII to permit so grave a breach of etiquette. The King received the Duke with his usual calmness, and made little of the danger; but the future Louis Philippe felt a strong dislike to acting under the leadership of the incapable Monsieur.

"I think," he objected, "that I should be more useful to your Majesty if I were to occupy myself in raising a body of troops between Paris and Lyons, in case of an emergency."

"Not at all," answered the King, interrupting him rather drily. "You will be much more useful with my brother, who will give you a division, or a body of troops to command—at any rate, something; whatever he likes."

"And your Majesty is not nervous at being left alone at Paris? For, in your present state, not able to move from this armchair, it seems to me that it would be very desirable for you to have one of the Princes near you, and I should be very happy if you would deign to allow me the post."

"I am very much obliged to you," said the King; "but I do not require anybody, and it will be better for you to go to Lyons. I do not say that you will start to-day; but get ready, and come again to see me to-morrow morning."²

However, next day the Duke learnt, to his intense relief, that he was not to go alone with Monsieur, but that Maréchal Macdonald was to accompany them; though he was indignant at hearing that he was not to be allowed a Marshal in attendance on him, as were

¹ *Journal de Louis Philippe* (1815), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

all the other Princes ; in fact, that he was, as he expressed the matter sarcastically, to go merely as Monsieur's aide-de-camp.

"Oh, surely not," said Blacas. "Monsieur will employ Monseigneur in a suitable manner."

"But how do you expect him to employ me, my dear Count, when there are no troops?"¹ cried the Duke impatiently.

The *Moniteur* of March 7, which announced the departure of Monsieur and of his unwilling kinsman, convoked the Chambers at once ; while a Royal Order declared "Napoleon Bonaparte to be a traitor and a rebel," and threatened those who attached themselves to his standard, or did not oppose his progress, with condign punishment as privy to his rebellion.

Two days later the King from his balcony saw the garrison and the National Guard of Paris pass in review before him. He was apparently calm and confident. "I have at once taken the measures which I judge best adapted to make him [Napoleon] repent, and I count with confidence on their success,"² he wrote to Talleyrand on March 7th. Possibly this equanimity was in part assumed ; as, while Napoleon marched triumphantly through the country and regiment after regiment deserted to him, the newspapers—among them the King's official organ, the *Moniteur*—invented stories of the irritation felt against him by the populace, and of the ill-success of his enterprise. "The Brigand of the Island of Elba," "The Corsican Ogre," "The Cowardly Assassin of the Duc d'Enghien," such were some of the epithets used to describe the man on whom a short time earlier the press had

¹ *Journal de Louis Philippe*, p. 15.

² *Correspondance inédite de Talleyrand et de Louis XVIII*, p. 316.

showered the most fulsome praise; while the Municipal Council of Paris declared itself ready "to perish at the foot of the throne to defend its King, at the feet of Louis le Désiré to defend its Father."

The moderate Constitutional party, which formed the bulk of the nation, were in truth much dismayed by Napoleon's incursion; for though discontented with the Bourbon Government, which one of them termed a "fatherly anarchy," they had no desire to return to the military despotism of Napoleon.

However, Napoleon's strength was irresistible, and Monsieur and the Duc d'Orléans were obliged by the defection of their troops to leave Lyons in a hurry, when the town was at once occupied by the invader, who issued from there decrees annulling all that had been done since Louis XVIII had come to the throne. In vain did the King publish proclamation after proclamation to the nation and to the Army, at first couched in grandiose terms, at last almost imploring.

Soon tidings arrived of a terrible misfortune. The Maréchal Ney, who had gone into Franche-Comté to meet Napoleon, promising the King that he would bring him back in an iron cage, deserted to his former master. News of his defection was brought to the King at six o'clock in the morning, by Monsieur de Bourmont, who had great difficulty in penetrating to Louis XVIII at this early hour. On hearing it, the King, who, as we know, very seldom showed any emotion, seemed confounded, and for the time lost courage. It was only five days earlier that he had seen Ney almost kneeling before him, while he swore allegiance to the Bourbon cause, and protested his zeal in the most moving terms. The King begged Bourmont to be

most careful to keep the news of Ney's treachery a secret as long as possible.¹

This was a most necessary precaution, for Paris was distracted and in the utmost confusion, while the most contrary, and often the most extraordinary plans, were proposed, discussed, and dismissed. Suspicions of the wildest nature were in circulation; nothing seemed impossible in this strangely disturbed time; and the Maréchal Soult, Minister for War, and Dandré, Head of the Police, were both accused of treachery. Strange to relate, Monsieur and the ultra-Royalists had fixed their hopes on the regicide and traitorous Fouché, Duc d'Otrante; and they approached him with a view to obtaining his opinion, and possibly his support. He is said to have answered: "Save the King, and I will save the Monarchy." It was already apparent that Louis XVIII would be forced to leave Paris, and many and tumultuous were the Councils which were held in Blacas' room at the Tuileries. He, tall, cold, and impassible, was generally the intermediary between the King—who was still laid up with gout, which always began with an attack of fever—and the outside world; and was detested by every one. One of his enemies writes of his "great reserve, which showed itself in insupportable arrogance, his tall figure, long in the body and short in the legs, the regular, cold, dried-up features of his pallid face, which was never unwrinkled, his head totally bald and covered by too fair a wig."²

He seems to have been honest and upright, though not very able; and he was sincerely attached to the King, and anxious to follow in the course marked out

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 107.

² *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. ii. p. 203.

for him by his friend d'Avaray, but he found himself in an impossible, even a ridiculous position. The post of Royal favourite had been almost out of date in Louis XIV's time, and a constitutional monarch with such an appendage was an impossibility. However, for the present Blacas struggled with the task imposed upon him, while his unfortunate manner embittered relations between him and the outside world, even more than was necessitated by the anomaly of his post as Louis XVIII's unofficial confidential adviser on every subject.

Many and contradictory were the suggestions which besieged his ears as to the proper course for the King to follow, in the now almost certain case that Napoleon would enter Paris. Vitrolles wished Louis XVIII to retire to La Rochelle, where he would be surrounded by the faithful Royalists of Bretagne and of La Vendée; while Montesquiou objected that the King would thus identify himself completely with the ultra-Royalist party, and institute himself King of La Vendée instead of King of France. The Maréchal de Marmont, on the other hand, considered that Louis XVIII should not leave Paris, but should fortify the Tuileries and remain there; while Blacas' contribution to the various views expressed by different members of the Council, was to the effect that the King should wait quietly for the arrival of the Emperor, and that when he heard that his enemy was within a few miles from Paris, he should drive out to meet him in an open carriage, accompanied by Blacas, his First Gentleman of the Chamber, and his Captain of the Guards, and surrounded by the members of the Chamber of Deputies on horseback. It was evidently expected by Blacas that Napoleon would be so much

impressed by this imposing spectacle that he would return abashed and confounded to the island of Elba !

An intelligent passivity appears to have been Louis XVIII's rôle at this time ; he listened to every one, and generally gave but little sign of approval or of disapproval as the different projects were submitted to him. " This impassibility seemed to him one of the principal attributes of Royalty,"¹ says Vitrolles. However this may have been, it was a most useful asset politically, and stood the King in better stead than the utmost activity would have done, unless directed by the brain of a genius. It is amusing to read how the lively, intriguing Vitrolles, whom the King appears to have liked, and to whom he certainly owed a debt of gratitude, was foiled when he advised courses which would certainly have brought about a civil war in France. This was done, not by open opposition, but by a prudence which did not reveal anything better left unsaid ; and by which the King, while never apparently opposing any measure proposed, and thus becoming cognisant of all, only answered Vitrolles' pressing instances for help in some measure to which he himself seemed favourable, " with a smile and a caressing look." To quote from Vitrolles : " ' You will arrange it beautifully,' he said to me." Whereas, as he no doubt knew very well, and as Vitrolles felt indignantly, one word from him to his Minister would have arranged the matter once for all.

In deference to the popular clamour, the King accepted Soult's resignation as Minister for War, and put the Duc de Feltre in his place, though he told Soult that he felt perfectly confident of his loyalty, and knew that his sword would never be drawn

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. iii. p. 161.

except in the Royal cause—a prophecy which was unfortunately incorrect.

Meanwhile, Napoleon was drawing ever closer to Paris, and it was noticed that the King began to show signs of anxiety and trouble, that his eyes were sometimes red, and he looked as though the blood had gone to his head. This agitation only lasted a few days, and he then recovered his serenity, and seemed resolved to bear with equanimity whatever fate might have in store for him.

Matters, indeed, seemed almost desperate, and, in a last attempt to rouse the nation's loyalty, a Royal séance was held, to which both Chambers were summoned, as well as the Staffs of the 1st Military Division and of the National Guard. Brandy had been distributed among the troops lining the streets from the Tuileries to the Palais-Bourbon, but they allowed the King to pass in almost total silence.

He was wearing for the first time the medal of the Legion of Honour, and pointed this out to the Duc d'Orléans, who accompanied him.

“Do you see this, Sir?” he asked.

“Yes, Sire,” answered the Duc d'Orléans: “I see it with pleasure. It is true that I should have liked to see it sooner; but, at any rate, Sire, ‘mieux vaut tard que jamais.’”¹

In the Palais de Bourbon the King spoke with his usual eloquence, saying that he had come to tighten the bonds existing between him and his people, whom he had reconciled with the rest of Europe, and for whose happiness he had worked in the past, and still continued to work. “Could I at sixty years of age finish my career better than in dying for my people?” he said;

¹ *Journal de Louis Philippe* (1815), p. 127.

“I do not fear anything for myself, but I fear for France. The man who comes to light among us the torch of civil war brings also the scourge of foreign war ; he comes indeed to destroy the Constitutional Charter which I have given you, my finest title in the eyes of posterity ; that Charter which is cherished by all Frenchmen, and which I here swear to maintain.”

The King's oration was received with much applause, and every one promised to be faithful to him till death, while in the midst of the tumult Monsieur came forward to swear allegiance to the King, and to the Constitutional Charter, and the two brothers embraced amidst general emotion.

However, it was evident that the end was very near, and many anxious discussions were held as to the way in which the King's escape should be most safely managed. The King laughed heartily when, on the idea being mooted that he should go in a *chaise à porteur* to a hackney coach, and thence to his travelling carriage, which was to wait in some distant part of Paris, or even outside it, the Duc de Berry objected : “But where will you find a *chaise à porteur* big enough, and two men strong enough, to carry the King ?”¹

As the Emperor approached Paris, the army at Fontainebleau began to desert ; and it was apparent that unless the King wished to become a prisoner, he must at once fly. Therefore, on the night of March 19th, 1815, Louis XVIII walked painfully out of the Tuileries, supported by Blacas and by the Duc de Duras. He had been most anxious to remain in Paris, but had at last yielded to reiterated advice ; that of the Duc d'Orléans taking the form of telling

¹ *Souvenirs du Maréchal Macdonald*, p. 365.

him that a *bon-mot* was in circulation, to the effect that if, as reported, the King's intentions were to remain in his armchair when Napoleon entered Paris, "the victim would be greater than the executioner."¹ Such was the popular reputation of the murderer of the Duc d'Enghien.

As the King went out of the Tuileries, he whispered to Jaucourt, who was acting as Foreign Minister during Talleyrand's absence at Vienna, "Inform my Ministers that I am going to Lille, and that I wish them to assemble there. Tell the Ambassadors that I shall be charmed to see them at Lille; but that it is quite allowable for them to go to their respective Courts, should they prefer to do so."²

In making the North of France his destination, the King was following Talleyrand's advice from Vienna, where the Congress was still sitting; while Lille was especially recommended by Maréchal Macdonald, as a town whose loyalty was likely to remain unshaken. The start from the Tuileries was made at midnight, in pouring rain, and Blacas was in so great a hurry, that to Talleyrand's horror he left behind him some important and compromising papers. Blacas did not on this emergency cover himself with glory, as he failed to make arrangements for providing the King with money on the journey, so that, as Jaucourt remarked indignantly, the fugitives were "without a penny," and he added that he could fill ten pages on the subject of Morsieur de Blacas' follies!

The King had not departed sooner than was absolutely necessary, for on the evening of the 20th Napoleon entered Paris and took possession of the Tuileries,

¹ *Journal de Louis Philippe* (1815), p. 114.

² *Correspondance inédite de Talleyrand et de Louis XVIII*, p. 360.

which had been vacated by the King less than twenty-four hours earlier. Since his landing near Cannes on March 1st, it had taken Napoleon just under three weeks to make his way to the capital of the country ; and he had fought no battles, and encountered no serious opposition on the way. Even in Bordeaux—only a year ago so loyal to the Bourbons—the army had deserted to the enemy ; and Madame, who had bravely interviewed the soldiers in their barracks, and had earned from Napoleon the commendation of being “ the only man of her family,” renounced her vain attempt to rally the troops to the Bourbon cause, and retired discomfited and disappointed to England.

The Duc d'Angoulême was, however, doing his best to show that Napoleon's contempt of his family was unmerited ; for he was fighting bravely in the centre of France, in the hope of gaining possession of Lyons. Eventually he too was obliged to retreat ; and, to the intense anxiety of the Royalists, was taken prisoner by Napoleon, who, however, sent him to the port of Cette, whence he embarked for Spain.

Meanwhile, the King arrived at Abbeville, where nothing had been arranged for his reception, but where he had determined to wait for Monsieur and for his Household Troops. This privileged body, however, being mainly ornamental and not adapted for emergencies, was in much confusion ; and Maréchal Macdonald met them on their way, some leading their horses, some in carts, and some carrying their portmanteaux—looking, in fact, like “ a rout after defeat.”¹ He therefore advised the King not to wait for them ; especially as telegraphic communication with Paris had not been interrupted, and Napoleon might arrive there at any

¹ *Souvenirs du Maréchal Macdonald*, p. 369.

moment, and would be at once informed of the King's movements. But Louis XVIII, who was as calm as though he had been in the Tuileries, insisted that he must have his dinner before leaving Abbeville.

At Saint-Pol, and at Béthune, the King was greeted with the utmost enthusiasm ; at the latter place, where he arrived at five in the morning, the toilettes of the people, who thronged to see him, were in a most unfinished condition, and the "sous-préfet" appeared at the carriage door "with one leg half bare, feet in slippers, his coat under his arm, waistcoat and shirt unbuttoned, and hat on his head ! He was not able to take it off because his hands were occupied with his sword, and with his cravat, which he was vainly trying to tie round his neck." ¹

At Lille, where the King arrived at about twelve o'clock on March 22nd, and which he intended to make the seat of his Government, the inhabitants received him with acclamations ; but the troops lining the streets were gloomily silent, and kept their eyes fixed on the ground as though they did not see the King's carriage.² The King was much struck by their aspect, and remarked on it when he arrived at the house of the Mayor, which had been prepared for his use. In the evening, a Council was held, at which the Duc d'Orléans, who had arrived at Lille the day before, the King, Blacas, and the Marshals Macdonald, Berthier, and Mortier, were present. A letter was read from Monsieur, in which he said that the famous Household Troops, or "Maison du Roi," which it must be remembered had been formed to be the great bulwark of Royalty in times of revolution, were in such confusion

¹ *Souvenirs du Maréchal Macdonald*, p. 372.

² *Journal de Louis Philippe* (1815), p. 214.

that he had resolved to disband them ; and that he and his sons would at once embark at Tréport, or at Dieppe, and would join the King in England or on the Continent.

This letter had crossed one from the King to Monsieur, ordering his brother to bring the troops of the "Maison du Roi" to join him at Lille, and the discussion turned on the question of Monsieur's most likely course. At the same time news arrived from Paris of Napoleon's imminent arrival, and it was the general opinion of the Council that in view of the evidently disloyal condition of the troops, it would not be safe for the King to remain in Lille ; but to the suggestion, strongly urged by the Duc d'Orléans, that the King should leave secretly that night, the Maréchal Macdonald objected that it would not be dignified for him to fly from a place where he had announced his intention of setting up his Government. Blacas went at eleven o'clock that night to put this view of the matter before the King, and found him in his shirt shaving. Blacas submitted the Marshal's suggestion to him, and he put down the razor, and said, with a perhaps excusable oath ; "Why do they change their opinion every moment, and prevent me from either starting or going to bed ?"

The poor King was extremely uncomfortable at this time, for his portmanteau, containing six shirts, a dressing-gown, and some slippers of which he was particularly fond, had been stolen on the way from Paris, and he had now no change of linen. "They have taken my shirts, and before then I had not very many," he complained to Marshal Macdonald. Then he added sadly, "I regret even more the loss of my slippers ; you will know one day, my dear Maréchal,

what it is to lose slippers which have taken the form of one's feet." ¹

The old Prince de Condé had just arrived, and made a slight diversion by asking whether, as next day was the Thursday in Holy Week, the King intended to observe the Ceremony of the Washing of Feet, a question at which even the King could hardly help laughing.

Early next morning news came of the organisation of Napoleon's Government, and the King decided that instead of moving to Dunkirk as had been proposed, because it could easily be fortified, and it would be possible in case of necessity to cross from there to England, it would be wisest to go into Belgium; where the Prince of Orange had already offered the Duc d'Orléans the assistance of the Allied Army for the Bourbon cause.

The King left Lyons at about three in the afternoon, and on his way to the frontier town of Menin, he was much touched by seeing the inhabitants of the villages through which he passed, kneel in the mud imploring him not to desert them. He often spoke with pleasure afterwards of this proof of their affection for him.

The Duc d'Orléans was left in Lyons, and the King parted from the Maréchal Macdonald at the frontier; but when he arrived at Ghent he found Monsieur and the Duc de Berry waiting to receive him. On March 30th he entered the town, dressed in a sky-blue coat, and sitting in a state carriage drawn by six horses, and drove to the Hôtel d'Hane de Steenhuyse, which had been placed at his disposal.

The mansion is in the middle of the town, and contains several fine works of art. The suite in it

¹ *Souvenirs du Maréchal Macdonald*, p. 376.

occupied by the King consisted of five rooms: two drawing-rooms—one of them with a magnificent floor of Italian marquetry—a dining-room, bedroom, and audience-chamber. The rest of the Royal Family took up their abode in different houses in the town. The Comte d'Artois paid a thousand francs a day for his own accommodation and that of his suite at the Hôtel des Pays-Bas; and the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who came several times to Ghent during Louis XVIII's stay there, occupied a house near the King in the rue des Champs. Before long all the King's Ministers had made their way to Ghent—the Duc de Feltre, Minister of War, Monsieur de Jaucourt, Foreign Minister during Talleyrand's absence, the Grand Chancellor Dambray, l'Abbé Louis, and Monsieur Beugnot. The Abbé de Montesquiou was in London, and Louis XVIII sent for Monsieur de Chateaubriand to occupy his place temporarily as Minister of the Interior. The eminent writer must have been rather an alarming colleague, as he evidently considered it necessary to be prepared for all possible contingencies, and appeared at the Councils with a huge Damascus sabre hanging from his side on a long red cord.¹ To the King's satisfaction all the foreign Powers sent their Ambassadors to Ghent, thus refusing to recognise Napoleon's usurpation of the government. Pozzo di Borgo, who represented Russia, wrote: "My arrival here has been an angel's apparition, though I do not pretend to be one."²

The King got up every morning at six o'clock, and went at once to his study. After working there, he

¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. iii. p. 327.

² *Correspondance de Pozzo di Borgo et de Nesselrode*. Letter 5, April 17, 1815.

heard Mass, and déjeuner followed at ten o'clock, while in the afternoon he drove in a carriage drawn by six horses round the ramparts of the town, whence there were fine views of the surrounding country. He followed this recreation by a Council of his Ministers, who lodged in different houses in the town, dined at three francs a head, and none of them, except the Duc de Feltre, kept a carriage. Their chief dissipation seems to have been an occasional expedition to a particular inn in the country, where they feasted on an enormous dish of the delicate white fish for which Ghent was noted.

Sometimes they were invited to dine with the King, when he did the honours "with the politeness of the Old Court, and with the personal grace which distinguished him."¹ At each course he offered his visitors some of the dish before him, taking the opportunity of looking round the table with a kindly glance and a few gracious words to each. He carved the joint with rare dexterity, and "as though in his youth he had practised himself in the art of executing the smallest details with elegance."

He was in truth on all occasions a King. "His misfortunes never wrung from him the smallest concession. His pride grew with his abasement; his diadem was his name. He seemed to say, 'Kill me, you will not kill the centuries inscribed on my forehead.'"²

Nevertheless, in spite of his consciousness of his own dignity, his apparent serenity, and his sense of the humour of the situation, there must have been times when a feeling of amazement overcame him, and he

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 288.

² Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. iii. p. 458.

was almost overwhelmed with the flood of new light which poured in from all sides. For he was at an almost unique juncture in the annals of Royalty, being set aside for a while, and given breathing-space, while the barrier which guarded him from the tongues of the multitude was removed, and from his own country, as well as from Europe at large, arrived criticism, admonitions, blame, and advice. When he first came to the throne he had known little or nothing of his country; and this is not surprising, as it was difficult to learn much of the real trend of opinion in Imperial France, crushed into apparent uniformity by the iron rule of Napoleon; and even when, under the weak Government of the Restoration, clamorous voices occasionally made themselves heard, the King had taken credit to himself for the philosophy which accounted without undue alarm for their discordance.

Now, however, the unlooked-for catastrophe had arrived; and after a time of doubt and bewilderment the King began to learn his lesson. Other members of the Royal Family were not so wise as he. Monsieur and his followers were firm in their belief that the trouble had been caused by the weakness of the Government. "Well, my dear Beugnot," said his Royal Highness to the Minister of Marine, "here we are, out again; and whose fault is it? Can you this time blame my principles, which were not followed, or my friends, who were carefully kept at a distance. Come, be candid, and say what you really think."¹

Monsieur's party, the "Pavillon Marsan," as they were called, from the part of the Tuileries occupied by the Prince, were strongly represented at Ghent; and they considered that Louis XVIII was preparing

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 271.



From a lithograph by Delpeche.

JOSEPH FOUCHÉ, DUC D'OTRANTE.

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to follow in the footsteps of the unfortunate Louis XVI, and would lose his crown by making unwise concessions. This Monsieur was determined, for his children's sake as well as his own, to prevent at all hazards; and as he and the other members of the Royal Family were intensely jealous of Blacas, and very probably quite sincerely considered his advice pernicious, they besieged the King with prayers for his removal from his position as Master of the "Maison du Roi," and if possible his exile from France.

It is curious to see that while the ultra-Royalists wished to destroy a man whose tenets were practically their own, their hopes still centred on the regicide Fouché, who was now chief of Napoleon's Government, but who had already realised that it was not likely to be durable, and despatched Monsieur Gaillard to Ghent to negotiate with Monsieur for the return of the Bourbons. Fouché's tactics were as usual devious, for at the same time his agents had gone to Basle to discuss with the Austrian Minister, Prince Metternich, the possibility of putting Napoleon's son in his father's place, and he had sent an envoy to Vienna to propose the possibility of making the Duc d'Orléans King of France.

Everything in France was in confusion; and even from Vienna, where the Congress was still sitting, came disquieting news. The Great Powers had heard with dismay of Napoleon's landing on the shores of France, and had at once drawn up a treaty by which each was obliged to provide an army of 150,000 men, and to fight till Napoleon Bonaparte and his adherents should be definitely beaten. This was a terrible necessity, and the assembled Sovereigns very naturally blamed Louis XVIII

for the weakness and mistakes of his Government, which had in their opinion compelled them to resort to it, so that there was already talk at the Congress of the possibility of substituting the Duc d'Orléans for his cousin as King of France. Talleyrand has been accused of being secretly the instigator of this idea, and the Duc d'Orléans, who had now retired to England, and had refused to obey the King's order to come to Ghent, was certainly most flattering in his expressions to Louis XVIII's Minister of Foreign Affairs, telling Talleyrand that "there was no opinion which he valued more than his, and no one whose counsel he desired more earnestly, or to whom he would be more disposed to defer."¹ The Duc d'Orléans was also careful to send Talleyrand the advisory letters he had written to Louis XVIII, and to make him the confidant of his grievances against that Monarch, who had excluded the First Prince of the Blood from his Council, and wished to treat him as "a part of a procession, or as a hanging for a wall!"

The Duc d'Orléans was a danger even more threatening than that of Napoleon's invasion, as well as infinitely more galling to the King's pride; and it must have been a terrible blow to him when Talleyrand wrote to tell him of an interview between Lord Clancarty and the Czar, at which the latter, who had no special cause for loving the Bourbons, mooted the possibility of the Duc d'Orléans being invested with the crown of France; but the English Minister fortunately refused to entertain the proposition.

In the same letter, Talleyrand gave the King advice and even instructions from the Powers on his political

¹ *Journal de Louis Philippe*, 1815. Letter to Talleyrand, April 23.

conduct. "It is considered very necessary that your Majesty should set to work to rally all the parties round himself, by assuring to them all without distinction the advantages of constitutional government. The Powers consider that a Declaration from your Majesty in this spirit, would be a powerful auxiliary to the forces they intend to bring into the field. Several of them wish also that your Majesty, throwing on your Ministers the responsibility of any faults which may have been committed, should form a new Ministry as though you were in France, which should be composed so that each party might find in it the guarantees they may require. I have been asked to write about this to your Majesty."¹ Further advice, of which the Czar seems to have been the mouth-piece, treated of the danger of allowing Monsieur and his sons a voice in the Government, and of the necessity of getting rid of Monsieur de Blacas, who is spoken of as "the person who is most in your Majesty's confidence."

As a result of this letter, the King, who had good cause for distrusting Talleyrand, ordered him to come at once to Ghent; an order which he refused to obey.

The tone of the letters the King received from the Duc d'Orléans, who showed as great a reluctance as did Talleyrand to associate himself with the Royal policy by going to Ghent, which he evidently looked upon as a second Coblenz infested by Émigrés, must have been even more trying to bear.

For the Duc d'Orléans set himself up as mentor to his cousin, and gave him much advice, which was no doubt excellent, discoursing on the dangers of

¹ *Talleyrand Correspondence*. Letter to Louis XVIII, April 23, 1815.

being surrounded by Émigrés, or of entering France with the Allied Armies, as had been done in 1792 ; and begging him to conciliate the Army, instead of employing a separate body such as the " Maison du Roi " for the defence of the Monarchy ; while he persisted in remaining at Twickenham, so that the King was deprived of the support of his presence at Ghent.

Compared with the counsel lavished on Louis XVIII by his young cousin, Guizot's recommendations must have been palatable. He was sent to Ghent as an envoy from the moderate Royalists, who were grouped around Royer-Collard, and were determined to express to the King their views of the political situation, and to inculcate on him the necessity of persevering in constitutional rule, and of accepting frankly the new conditions of French society. Guizot was in addition specially charged to beg the King to send away Blacas, and to associate Talleyrand with his Government.

Ghent was not, after all, a second Coblenz, and when Guizot arrived there, he found that many of the Ministers, Jaucourt, Louis, and Beugnot among the number, were quite of the same mind as he, and were most anxious for government according to the Charter. The King granted him an audience, and he says : " Two things are deeply imprinted on my mind, the helplessness, and the dignity of the King ; there was in the attitude and look of this immovable old man, who seemed as though nailed to his armchair, a lofty serenity, and in the midst of his weakness, a tranquil confidence in the power of his name and of his rights, with which I was struck and touched." ¹

Guizot spoke plainly to the King about the weakness

¹ Guizot, *Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 85.

and inconsistency of the Government, which would, he said, prevent its durability ; and the King, to whom this must have been a very old story, answered nothing. But when Guizot attacked Blacas, he said : "I will keep to everything I have promised in the Charter, but names have nothing to do with it ; what can the friends I have in my palace matter to France, as long as no unsuitable measures are passed there ? Speak to me of more serious causes for alarm." Then Guizot referred to the disquietude of the Protestants in the South of France, who had been subjected to violence by the ultra-Royalists, and the King said : "That is very bad ; I will do what may be necessary to prevent it" ; adding, however, with a certain pertinence, "but I cannot prevent everything ; I cannot be at the same time a constitutional and an absolute King."

Louis XVIII seemed to Guizot to be intelligent and impartial, to take a just but superficial view of things ; but, though subtle in his dealings with people and careful of appearances, to be little interested in or instructed about what was below the surface of things, and "almost equally incapable of the mistakes which ruin, as of the successes which found the future of a Royal race."

CHAPTER XIV

Quatre-Bras—Waterloo—Louis XVIII leaves Ghent—Arrival at Mons—Parting from Blacas—Talleyrand—Proclamation of Cateau-Cambresis—Summons Talleyrand to Cambrai—Proclamation of Cambrai—Vitrolles, Talleyrand, Fouché—Fouché made Chief Minister of Police—Louis XVIII's entry into Paris—King's sentiments on Constitutional Government—New Cabinet—Decazes—Hardships inflicted by Allies—Louis XVIII's courage—Ultra-Royalist Chamber—The Terreur Blanche—Fouché's fall—Talleyrand's fall—The Duc de Richelieu becomes head of Cabinet—His character.

TOWARDS the middle of June, matters at Ghent became unpleasantly exciting. On the 15th, the King received news that Napoleon had crossed the frontier with his army on his way to meet the English, Prussian, and Belgian troops, and a day or two later a general panic was caused in the town by the news of his victory over the Allies at Quatre-Bras. Many of the French fugitives left Ghent in alarm, but the King, though surrounded by people who implored him to fly, was perfectly calm. "Messieurs," he said, "I have heard nothing officially ; if the misfortune had been as great as you say it is, I should have been warned. I shall not move from here unless I am forced to do so by the most imminent necessity ; let those who are frightened go." ¹

However, in the middle of the day on June 18th, Chateaubriand made his way out of Ghent by the

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Rochecouart*, p. 393.

Brussels gate to take a solitary stroll. He had the *Commentaries of Cæsar* with him, and was deep in his book, when he was disturbed by a dull sound which seemed like distant thunder. He stopped for a moment to listen, but heard nothing. "I continued my way," he says, "and had not taken thirty steps before the rolling sound began again, sometimes in short reverberations, sometimes long and at unequal intervals; and occasionally nothing could be distinguished but a quiver in the air, which was communicated to the earth of these immense plains, so far off was it. These detonations, not being as vast, as undulating, nor as consecutive as those of thunder, made me think of a battle. I was near a poplar, planted at the corner of a field of hops, and I leant against the trunk of the tree with my face turned towards Brussels. A south wind had risen, and wafted to me distinctly the sound of artillery. This great battle, yet nameless, the echoes of which I heard at the foot of a poplar, and of which a village clock had just sounded the knell, was the battle of Waterloo."¹

In the evening a fresh panic was caused at Ghent, by the news arriving from Brussels that crowds of wounded were coming into the town. Louis XVIII was much agitated; anxiety and excitement seemed to have given him strength and power of movement, and he paced to and fro, going from time to time to the window to listen for the expected courier.² What had happened? Was he doomed to become once more an exile and wanderer?

Late that night the news of Wellington's great victory reached him, and he slept in peace; while next

¹ *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, p. 497.

² See Houssaye, 1815, p. 132.

day came a letter from Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian Minister, advising the King to move at once to Paris, if he wished to make certain of the crown of France. This advice the King determined to follow in preference to that of Talleyrand, who, possibly with ulterior motives, counselled him not to approach the capital till he was certain of a favourable reception, but to establish himself at Lyons, where he would be surrounded by a friendly population.

Louis XVIII arrived at Mons, his first halting place, in melancholy mood, for he had at last made up his mind to dismiss Blacas, thus yielding, not only to the earnest desire of the French nation and of the Royal Family, but to the repeated instances of the Czar, Nesselrode, Talleyrand, Pozzo di Borgo, Metternich, and Wellington. Mons was to be the scene of the parting, of which the favourite saw the necessity as strongly as did his master, though he seemed naïvely surprised at Talleyrand's mistaken dislike for him, and said that he had always considered the Prince de Bénévent to be indispensable to his Master, and that he could have worked very well with him. Though Blacas appears never to have entirely filled the place vacated by d'Avaray, the separation from him caused Louis XVIII the utmost grief, and, feeling that he owed much to his friend, he was most anxious to show his gratitude. Therefore, besides making him a rich man for life, he sent him as Ambassador to Naples, whence he went to Rome to negotiate with the Pope about the new Concordat, which Louis XVIII hoped to substitute for Napoleon's Concordat of 1801. Blacas went straight from his parting interview with the King to the Duc de Feltre, and told him with the utmost emotion that, wishing above all things for the

happiness of his Master and of his country, and fearing that even if he did not appear at the King's Councils his presence might be hurtful to his Majesty, he was retiring abroad, and would remain there till justice was done to him by public opinion. "Ready to sacrifice his life for the King, he did not hesitate even to sacrifice his honour for him."¹

When Beugnot spoke to Blacas of the isolation of the King, and of his unhappiness when his friend should have left him, Blacas answered :

"Ah, my poor Beugnot, you do not understand what the friendship of a King is ; I am sure that in a month from now he will be consoled."

Monsieur Beugnot laughed heartily when telling the story. "He made a mistake," he said ; "he made a mistake of twenty-seven days ! At the end of three days there was no remembrance left of the man who had enjoyed such great favour."²

Monsieur Beugnot appears by this assertion to have considered himself endowed with powers of an omniscient nature, for Louis XVIII was not a man who wore his heart upon his sleeve. However, even if the King did not find the separation from Blacas so terrible as the parting from d'Avaray had been, in the first freshness of his grief he was hardly likely to view Talleyrand with an indulgent eye, for he considered that he, working through the Duke of Wellington, had been the principal instigator of Blacas' downfall. He also suspected Talleyrand of intriguing at Vienna in the interests of the Duc d'Orléans, and his Foreign Minister had further increased his indignation by refusing to obey his summons to come to him at

¹ *Rochechouart Mémoires*, p. 394.

² *Mémoires du Baron de Vitrolles*, vol. iii. p. 101.

Ghent, justifying his disobedience to the Royal commands by a pretence of bad health, and the necessity for a course of Carlsbad waters. "Talleyrand boasts," Louis XVIII said bitterly, "of having put the crown for the second time upon my head, and now threatens to return to Germany."¹

Talleyrand, for his part, fresh from Vienna, where he had seemed the most important person in Europe, burst into violent anger when he spoke of Louis XVIII's ingratitude and folly. He arrived at Mons the evening before the King's departure, and while holding a reception, at which he spoke most openly of his grievances and of the mistakes of the Bourbon Government, he refused to pay his respects to the King, and when pressed to do so by his friends, said with superb arrogance, "I am never in a hurry; to-morrow will be time enough."² He believed himself to be indispensable, and apparently considered that Louis XVIII would wait at Mons till he should choose to go to see him. He was therefore absolutely incredulous when he heard that the King would, in defiance of his advice, continue his journey to Paris early next morning. "He will not dare!"³ he said contemptuously.

However, Louis XVIII was never deficient in moral courage, and at three in the morning Talleyrand was awoken by the news that the King was starting. According to the account given by Chateaubriand,⁴ "he could not believe his ears." "Cheated! betrayed!" he cried. They get him up, and there he is for the first time in his life, in the street at three o'clock in the

¹ Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. iv. p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*

morning, leaning on Monsieur de Ricé. He arrives in front of the King's house ; the leaders drawing the carriage already have their bodies half through the gateway. Some one signs to the postilion to stop. The King asks what is the matter ; they call to him, "Sire, it is Monsieur de Talleyrand." "He is asleep !" said Louis XVIII. "Here he is, Sire." "I will go in," answers the King. The horses turn back, the carriage door is opened, the King gets down and goes with difficulty into his private room, followed by the limping Minister. There Monsieur de Talleyrand begins an angry explanation. His Majesty listens to it, and answers, "Prince de Bénévent, you are leaving us? The waters will do you good. You will let us hear from you." The King leaves the Prince in a state of amazement, is conducted to his carriage, and starts.

In his disgust at Talleyrand's duplicity and want of respect for his authority, Louis XVIII seems at this time to have contemplated a Cabinet composed, at any rate partially, of the Ministry of the first Restoration ; and for this combination the Prince de Bénévent would certainly not have been suitable. Therefore Talleyrand, who had used the pretext of his desire to go to Carlsbad as a threat of resignation, was taken at his word, and was left by the King in so furious a condition that he was quite incoherent.

At Cateau-Cambresis, the King's next stopping-place and the headquarters of the Duke of Wellington, Louis XVIII published a proclamation which did not show his usual tact and sagacity, for in it he spoke of the "inconceivable defection" of his subjects, and said he was returning "to reward the good, and to put into execution the laws already existing against

the guilty"; while he did not breathe a word of clemency, nor express any doubt as to the complete wisdom of his previous modes of government.

However, when the King had recovered his equanimity, better counsels prevailed; and he realised that as Talleyrand's separation from him had caused a split in his Council, and in consequence the more important of his former Ministers were not accompanying him on his journey towards Paris, but had remained at Mons with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it would not be safe to allow pique to prevail over policy. Therefore, on the advice of Wellington, supported by Pozzo di Borgo, the Russian Minister, who, in addition to a real affection for the Bourbons, possessed a thorough knowledge of the situation, he sent to beg Talleyrand to come to him for a conference on the situation. Talleyrand hesitated, being still on his dignity, but was soothed by a letter from the Duke of Wellington saying that it was he who had insisted on the King going at once to Paris, and that if Talleyrand had known all the features of the situation, he would have understood the necessity for this policy.

Talleyrand therefore consented to meet the King at Cambrai, and Louis XVIII received him, as well as the other constitutional Ministers, with much affability, and made no mention of what had happened at Mons. A Council was to be held the next day, and in the evening Talleyrand collected all the Ministers at his house, and insisted to them that it was necessary for the King to issue a proclamation acknowledging the faults of his late Government, and appointing a provisory Commission till a Ministry should be formed. He asked Beugnot to draw up the proclamation, which

was very different in character from the one which had preceded it.

In it the King was made to say that he placed himself for the second time between his people and the Allied Armies, and that the difficulties in his way when he came first to the throne being numerous, in all probability his Government had made some almost unavoidable mistakes. The finish of the proclamation was to the effect that, except in the case of the instigators of the horrible treason which had cost the lives of so many of his subjects, the King promised a general amnesty.

As framed at first by Beugnot, there was another clause, in which the King asked pardon of his subjects for the mistakes into which he had been led by family affection, and promised amendment in the future. When Beugnot read the proclamation to the Council, which consisted, besides the King and Royal Family, of Talleyrand, Dambray, Feltre, Jaucourt, and Beurnonville, Louis XVIII, who had listened with a certain amount of emotion, asked to hear it again. After the second reading, Monsieur spoke with much indignation of this clause. He said that such expressions degraded Royalty.

Talleyrand answered, "Monsieur will pardon me if I differ from him. I find these expressions necessary, and well placed. The King has made mistakes; he has been misled by his affections. There is nothing too much said in that."

"Is it I," returned Monsieur, "whom you intend to designate in an indirect manner?"

"Yes, since Monsieur has started the discussion on these lines; Monsieur has done a great deal of harm."

“The Prince de Talleyrand forgets himself!”

“I fear so; but I am carried away by the truth.”

Monsieur le duc de Berry, in the tone of one who forcibly keeps down his anger: “It is only because of the presence of the King that I allow any one to treat my Father like this before me, and I should like to know——”

At these words, said in a tone even louder than the rest, the King made a sign to the Duc de Berry, and said: “Enough, nephew; it is for me alone to judge what is said in my presence and at my Council. Gentlemen, I cannot approve of the terms of the proclamation, nor of the discussion of which it has been the subject. The writer will correct his work, so as not to lose sight of the dignified propriety which it is necessary to observe when I am made to speak.”¹

Meanwhile, the active Vitrolles, who had been imprisoned by Napoleon’s orders, but released after Waterloo by Fouché, was working energetically for the restoration of Louis XVIII to the throne, and with this object in view, was having daily interviews with Fouché. Eventually, the latter promised to propose to the two Chambers the return of the Bourbons, if Maréchal Davoust, who was Minister of War and in command of the Army, would announce that Paris could not possibly be defended against the Allies; and the Allies, for their part, would promise to suspend hostilities if Louis XVIII were restored to the throne.

After many complicated negotiations, during which Talleyrand and Wellington visited Fouché as emissaries from Louis XVIII, and Fouché deceived every one in turn, the capitulation of Paris and the second Restoration of Louis XVIII were decided on. But

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 314.



From an engraving by Berthonier, after a drawing by Augustin.

CHARLES FERDINAND, DUC DE BERRY.

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the price had to be paid. The regicide Fouché must be rewarded, though when some one suggested that he should be made a Peer, the King showed his feelings plainly. "I prefer," he said, "appointing a Minister whom I can dismiss, to creating a peer, who is irremovable."¹

Strangely enough, not only Wellington and Talleyrand, but the members of the ultra-Royalist party with Monsieur at their head, insisted that there was no safety without Fouché in the Ministry, and Louis XVIII was forced to yield to the general clamour. Beugnot, who was acting as the King's Secretary of State during the journey from Ghent to Paris, gives the following account of the King's emotion when he affixed his signature to the document conferring on the regicide the appointment of Head of the Police.

"Monsieur de Talleyrand asked me if I had that day any signatures to get from the King, and on my saying yes, he asked me to add to them an order re-constructing the Ministry of Police, and putting Monsieur the Duc d'Otrante at the head of it. I did what I was told to do, and presented myself to the King with my portfolio, keeping till the last the order about which there was so much excitement. The King's face had lost nothing of its usual calm, and seemed rather to express content than sorrow. He wrote without difficulty, and in the usual way, the first signatures I asked from him, and took this opportunity of laughing at my impatience to re-enter Paris, as if, he said, I could not be separated even for a few days from the Opera and its concomitants. I reassured the King as to the ardour he supposed me to feel for the Opera, and even for its concomitants, and at the

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Vitrolles*, vol. iii. p. 115.

same time I presented to him for signature the order for the nomination of the Duc d'Otrante. The King glanced at it, and let it fall on the desk ; his pen dropped from his fingers, his eyes became gloomy, and he sunk suddenly down in his seat as though crushed by deadly thoughts. A melancholy silence had suddenly interrupted a conversation which had till that moment been easy and agreeable. The silence lasted several minutes, then the King said to me, with a deep sigh :

“‘So it must be done ! Come, then ! . . .’

“He took up the pen, stopped again before beginning to write, and said :

“‘Ah, my poor brother ! if you can see me, you will forgive me !’

“At last he signed ; but at the moment when he was doing it, trembling and with difficulty, great tears fell from his eyes and made the paper wet. I took up the order, I bowed, and left the room. Even if respect had not dictated this to me, I should not have been able to utter a word, nor have known what to say during such a heartrending scene.”¹

Fouché's presentation to Louis XVIII took place at Saint-Denis, the day before the King's entry into Paris. Chateaubriand sat in a corner of the antechamber waiting for admittance to the King. He says :

“Suddenly a door opens ; vice enters leaning silently on the arm of crime : Monsieur de Talleyrand walking supported by Monsieur Fouché ; the infernal vision passes slowly in front of me, enters the King's private room, and disappears.”²

In the presence of the King, even Fouché lost his assurance ; but the painful interview was short.

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 331.

² *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. iv. p. 25.

“I am aware, Sir,” said Louis XVIII, “of the services you have done me; the Duke of Wellington has informed me about them. I intend you to become Minister of Police; I hope that in that post you will do me further service.” He then asked Fouché a few questions about the state of Paris, which the latter answered shortly, and the audience was over.

At nine o'clock on July 8th, 1815, the tricoloured flag disappeared, and the white flag was hoisted on the Tuileries; and at half-past three the firing of cannon announced the King's arrival. Fouché had wished him not to pass through the crowded Faubourg Saint-Denis for fear of hostile demonstrations, but Louis XVIII refused to listen to him. The King was in a closed carriage, with the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Berry on each side of him. He looked sad and stern, and it was indeed a melancholy return to his capital. For the Allied Armies were in possession of Paris, and, exasperated by French fickleness, were not in the same indulgent mood as in the preceding year, the Prussians in particular showing an inclination to punish and humiliate France for the trouble she had caused them. Indeed, the Duke of Wellington was obliged to remonstrate with the Prussian General, Blücher, who had fixed cannon in all the most public places, and had tried to force an indemnity of a hundred millions of francs from the municipality of Paris. Louis XVIII was much distressed at the position of affairs: “They have bivouacked in the Court of the Tuileries, and cannon are pointed at the Pont-Royal! Against whom are they fighting? I will never believe that the Sovereigns have authorised anything like this.” . . . And after these words Beugnot, who tells the story,

says that the King put his elbows on his bureau and hid his face in his hands.”¹

The King, counselled by Pozzo di Borgo, by Wellington, and indeed by the representatives of all the Great Powers, who, moreover, being in possession of the country, had power to enforce their representations, had now determined to put aside all prejudices resulting from early training, and to govern as a constitutional monarch. This resolution cost him much, and he explains his views on the matter with his usual witty good sense, in a confidential letter, in which he refers to an article written to prove that the Monarchy had benefited from the Revolution. “I had a very good leg; it has been broken, and they have set it for me somehow. But at least I can walk, and I prefer limping to submitting to an operation which would probably result in making me bedridden. I think I am right. But that any one should support the view that it is an advantage for me to have had my leg broken, and to prove that, should insult, should calumniate my ancestors . . . that afflicts me.”

In spite, however, of the small modicum of enthusiasm the King could muster for the new political ideas, he was absolutely loyal in his determination to keep to them; and even Beugnot, who dislikes and belittles him, cannot withhold his admiration for his conduct in this respect.

Speaking of a clause in the Charter to which the King adhered strictly, and which forbade for all time the confiscation of property, whatever the offence might be, Beugnot expresses himself as follows: “On the King’s return from Ghent, when he found himself master of men who had not only betrayed, but

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 349.

outraged him, when from all sides cries of vengeance sounded in his ears, and he was told continually that during the 'Hundred Days' the enemies of his dynasty had not been so generous; when the majority of the Chamber of 1815 had expressed their impatience at this article of the Charter, had exhausted their efforts to find ways to elude it, and had shown very plainly how they would have greeted its withdrawal, Louis XVIII remained a King, and superior to all these short-sighted and revengeful views."¹

The new Cabinet was for the most part composed of men of moderate views. Besides Talleyrand, the President of the Council, who kept the post of Foreign Minister, and Fouché, who became Minister of Police, it included the Baron Louis as Minister of Finance, and the General Gouvion Saint-Cyr as War Minister. Under Fouché, holding the modest post of Prefect of Police, was a man whose name had been hitherto quite unknown, but who was destined to rise quickly to a position of the utmost prominence in France, whose policy was to have a most decisive influence on her history for the next few years, and who was to distance Blacas, and even d'Avaray, in the King's affections.

It had been decided by the representatives of the Foreign Powers, as well as by Talleyrand,² that, as no trust could be put in Fouché, it would be well to establish direct communication between his subordinate and Louis XVIII; and thus was laid the foundation of the fortunes of the future Duc Decazes. He was from the first looked upon with suspicion by the ultra-Royalists; and Vitrolles, who scented danger from afar, and was at

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, vol. ii. p. 330.

² *Correspondance Pozzo di Borgo and Nesselrode*, vol. ii. p. 232.

this time all-powerful, took the precaution of telling him that he must always apply to him and not to the King, whenever he wanted to arrange anything unknown to Fouché. This intrigue, however, failed ; as Talleyrand, who had no desire to increase Vitrolles' importance, while he evidently wished for his own ends to bring Decazes into contact with the King, ordered him not to obey Vitrolles, but to apply directly to Louis XVIII whenever this seemed expedient.

Decazes' first interview with the King was on the subject of a reported attempt at assassinating the Czar, which Talleyrand had employed him to investigate. The supposed poisoned water only contained saltpetre, which was used by the servants to wash window panes, and when Decazes explained this, the King said that he was glad to have as Prefect of Police a man who was so acute and intelligent, and that he wished him to return the next day with further details. The King also expressed astonishment when the young Prefect repeated Vitrolles' words to him, and said that he had no confidence in Fouché, and trusted to Decazes to stop his intrigues. Evidently Louis XVIII was favourably impressed by the pleasant manners, tact, and intelligence of the handsome young man. On the other hand, Decazes had made a bitter enemy in Vitrolles, who had himself wished to occupy the place of favourite vacated by Blacas, and who met the Prefect of Police as he was leaving the King's Cabinet, and could not have looked more astonished had he seen Medusa's head. "The bows we exchanged silently were the last between us," says Decazes significantly, and Vitrolles took care to inform Fouché that his subordinate was engaged without his knowledge in affairs which brought him into contact with the King ; so that another

apparently most dangerous adversary was secured to Decazes.

However, all obstacles were destined to fall before Decazes; for the King's objection to personal intercourse with Fouché made many interviews necessary between him and the young Prefect of Police, whose favour continued to grow. Louis XVIII, with his notorious desire for a close friend who would amuse him, think and feel with him, and receive his confidences, was now in a miserably isolated condition; for his policy was strongly reprobated by nearly all his family, and he was opposed tooth and nail by Monsieur, whose determination was only equalled by the lack of sequence and of reason in his ideas.

Many were Louis XVIII's troubles; for he had returned to a wretched country—rent by dissensions, threatened with dismemberment by the nations lying nearest to her frontier, and pillaged by the foreign troops, who laid siege to any towns which dared to refuse submission to them. Even France's best friend, the Czar, angry at the alliance concluded without his knowledge between France, Austria, and England at the Congress of Vienna, annoyed at Louis XVIII's want of enthusiasm about a proposed marriage between a Russian Grand Duchess and the Duc de Berry, and indignant with the Revolutionary party and with the Bonapartists for their late insurrection, did not feel his former warm attachment for French interests. National pride was terribly outraged by the demand of the Allies for the restitution of the Art treasures which had been seized by Napoleon in the countries he had vanquished, bitter complaints were caused by the fact that the foreign troops were lodged in Paris at the expense of the inhabitants, and

the 8,000,000 francs, to which the indemnity was reduced by Wellington's intervention with Blücher, seemed a large sum to the Parisians. In all the other towns the same severe policy was carried out by the Allies, and a cry of rage and humiliation rose from France at her almost desperate position.

One of the Prussian General's threats roused the King's spirit to the uttermost; and he showed that, though helpless and infirm, he was yet courageous and patriotic. In spite of Wellington's remonstrances, Blücher announced his intention of blowing up the bridge of Jena, the name of which evoked unpleasant recollections of defeat in Prussian ears. It was in vain that Louis XVIII at once rechristened the bridge the Pont des Invalides. The work of destruction was already begun when Decazes hurried to the King: "At my narration his face became lit up with the fire of anger. In a tone of calm and firm determination he ordered his carriage, and said to me: 'Monsieur le Préfet, let the Sovereigns know that in a few moments I shall be on the bridge they wish to destroy, and that it will be blown up with me on it, if this odious violation of the right of peoples and of treaties be not stopped in time.'"¹

Decazes hurried at once to the Hôtel Wagram, and told the Emperor of Austria of the King's heroic resolution. Francis II sent an aide-de-camp to the Czar and to the King of Prussia; and before Louis XVIII arrived at the bridge, the work of destruction had ceased, and the workmen had disappeared; while the

¹ This passage is taken from Decazes' notes, quoted by Ernest Daudet in *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*. Talleyrand quotes, in his *Mémoires*, words from the King to the same effect; and Beugnot's story, that he invented the King's heroic resolution for him, is proved to be untrue.

King returned to the Tuileries "amid the acclamations of an immense crowd, electrified by his heroism."

After reading this it is strange to realise that, in some quarters, Louis XVIII was never pardoned for the sufferings inflicted by his Allies (as the complainants sarcastically termed the invaders), and was even credited with feeling perverse satisfaction in the despoiling of France.

However, the country generally, in terror even for her national existence, and considering that her present miserable and crippled condition had been caused by infamous traitors, suddenly became ardently, unmeasuredly, and intolerantly reactionary. The Chamber of Deputies of 1815 was almost entirely ultra-Royalist, and the few men of other persuasions who had found entrance to its benches sat there ill at ease, feeling themselves suspected, if not of treasonable designs, at least of unsound and dangerous views. In many parts of France risings took place against the Bonapartists, the Revolutionaries, and the Protestants; and the town of Nîmes was in a state of terror, for bands of assassins marched through the streets, entering the houses of people who were suspected of Bonapartism, and pillaging and murdering. Marseilles was not behindhand in violence; in fact, throughout the South what is known as the "Terreur Blanche" was in progress—and little redress was possible, for the mass of the Deputies sided with the rioters. A Monsieur d'Argenson dared to speak timidly in the Chamber one day of the reported massacre of Protestants in the South; but a violent tumult at once arose to contradict him. "I have not stated facts," he said, as though daunted by the disturbance his words had caused; "I have not established allegations; I said

that I had heard uncertain and contradictory rumours. . . . It is the very vagueness of these rumours which renders a report from the Ministry on the state of the country necessary.”¹ However, Monsieur d’Argenson was not allowed to proceed, and was called to order for having mentioned, even in a tentative manner, facts which were known by every one, but which the ultras were determined to conceal.

The Duke of Wellington, and the Russian envoy Pozzo di Borgo, who represented Powers which were friendly to France, and wished, if she would cease to menace the peace of Europe, to restore her to her former position, watched with disgust and indignation the follies of the extreme party, which, if allowed to take their course, were certain to bring about another Revolution, another intervention of the Great Powers, and possibly, as a last resource, the dismemberment or permanent crippling of a country which would not learn to govern herself, and was the source of constant trouble to Europe. The Russian Minister, Nesselrode, did not mince his words when he wrote to Pozzo di Borgo, that devoted, if interested, adherent of the Bourbon cause: “I picture to myself your tribulations, my dear Pozzo, in the midst of those madmen during their ridiculous debates in the two Chambers.” And in another place he says: “As you are performing miracles, impart a little common sense to Monsieur and to his sons.”²

In this last remark justice was not done to the Duc d’Angoulême, who was, like Louis XVIII, broad-minded and moderate in his politics, but was too timid and full of respect for his father, and too much

¹ *Guizot Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 107.

² *Correspondance de Nesselrode et de Pozzo di Borgo*, vol. i. p. 236.

in subjection to his strong-minded wife, to dissent from them decidedly, though they had in reality no influence over him. "When Madame began one of her ultra-Royalist harangues, he used to cut her short," says Madame de Boigne; "'My dear Princess'"—it was thus that he addressed her—"we will not talk of it; we can neither agree nor persuade one another."¹

Therefore, there was one exception to the persistent opposition Louis XVIII received from his family; though the timid agreement of the commonplace Duc d'Angoulême was not much support against Monsieur's energetic, if inconsistent tactics, and Madame's determined attitude.

One good thing, at any rate, was done by the ultras of 1815—they accomplished the downfall of Fouché. He could not stand against their determined onslaught. In vain, to show his Royalist zeal, had he drawn up a list of over a hundred persons, who were either to be brought to judgment or to be exiled, for their participation in the treason of the Hundred Days. The list was not nearly long enough to satisfy the ultras; and even when cut down by Fouché's horrified colleagues—Decazes taking an active part in the matter—it excited intense indignation against him among the moderates, as well as alarm among the Revolutionaries throughout the country. Such a proceeding on the part of the man who had been Napoleon's principal Minister during the Hundred Days, was not only abominable but ridiculous. It was reported that Carnot, his comrade and subordinate during the short-lived Imperial interregnum, finding himself exiled to a part of France which was to be indicated by the Head of the Police, asked:

¹ Trans. *Madame de Boigne's Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 209.

“Where do you wish me to go, traitor?” and was answered, “Where you wish, idiot.”

A peaceful, permanent Government seemed impossible, and a sense of insecurity rested on every one, while Fouché, the stormy petrel of intrigue, treachery, and revolution, was in power; and a sigh of relief was uttered when, after he had read a report in which, apparently to keep well with the Revolutionary party, he gave an exaggerated account of the terrible condition of France, the new Deputies insisted on his retirement, and he was made Ambassador at Dresden. Louis XVIII was delighted to be quit of him. “God be praised!” he exclaimed, referring to his niece, “the poor Duchess will no longer be in danger of meeting that odious figure.”¹

Talleyrand soon followed, though he was determined to keep in power if possible, and endeavoured to curry favour with the Royalists by insisting that it was he who had dismissed Fouché. “But when will the King send the other away?” asked the deputies. “What other?” “Eh! Monsieur de Talleyrand.”²

The King did not trust his First Minister, and disliked him personally, though he was fond of jesting with him, and had earned from Talleyrand, who was not always winner in the contests of wit which passed between him and Louis XVIII, the sobriquet of the *Roi Nichard*, or the *Roi des Niches* (the joking King, King of Jokes). Possibly Talleyrand was not aware of his Majesty’s aversion for him, as Louis XVIII had inherited from his ancestors the useful art in despotic statecraft of being specially charming to any Minister with whom he was displeased. However, Talleyrand

¹ *Pasquier Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 393.

² *Vitrolles Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 221.

now gave the King the wished-for opportunity for showing that he could dispense with his services, for finding his position under the onslaught of two Chambers of ultra-Royalist Deputies well-nigh intolerable, he threatened to resign, unless the King would promise to support his Ministry through thick and thin.

His tone was peremptory—which was always mistaken policy when addressing Louis XVIII—and the King considered that personal intervention would not be constitutional, and would be fatal to his dignity. He looked up at the ceiling for a moment, and then said very gently :

“Well, then, I will do what they do in England. I will get some one to form another Ministry.”¹

So for the second time he defied the powerful Minister. The King showed the same calmness all through the affair, which caused the utmost excitement in France. He was told that some members of the Cabinet, not knowing what had happened, had come to see him.

“But it is done,” answered the King to Vitrolles, who tells the story.

“I did not understand,” says Vitrolles ; and I began to explain the motives and object of the Ministry, who were determined to retire unless the King would give them special support.

“But I tell you that it is done,” the King began again.

“Your Majesty has perhaps not heard that three of his Ministers are waiting. . . .”

“I repeat to you, for the third time, that it is done.”

And, answering my look of astonishment, the King

¹ *Vitrolles Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 228.

continued, "Monsieur de Talleyrand asked me the question himself, and I told him I should form another Ministry."

"What, Sire! is it decided?"

"Absolutely decided," he answered, with the most perfect tranquillity.¹

The King at once applied to the Duc de Richelieu, and begged him to take the leadership of the new Cabinet. The Duke had already refused to form one of the last Ministry by following Blacas as head of the *Maison du Roi*, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he was now persuaded by the King to come forward; his repugnance only being at last overcome by the Czar's promise to him that if he were at the head of affairs, France should be defended as far as possible from the depredating intentions of certain of the Great Powers.

Although the Duc de Richelieu was of aristocratic birth and was an *Émigré*, having entered the service of Russia when driven out of his own country by the Revolution, and having had the government of the Crimea and of the countries adjoining it confided to him, he was welcomed by the moderate party as a known adversary to the exaggerated pretensions of the ultra-Royalists; while his generous disinterestedness, his modesty, and devotion to duty, had won him general respect. The King could not have made a better choice of a leader for the Government.

Decazes was substituted for Fouché as Minister of Police, while Richelieu took the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs in the place of Talleyrand. Mistakes were naturally inevitable in the forming of a Cabinet by two men who, like the King and

¹ *Vitrolles Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 226.

Richelieu, had been for many years exiled from their country ; and there was a certain substratum of truth in Talleyrand's sarcastic comment that Richelieu was "l'homme de France qui connait le mieux la Crimée" ; but on the whole the new Ministers were remarkable for their clear-sighted views and moderate opinions, in contradistinction to the foolishly extremist policy of the Deputies with whom they were destined to work.

CHAPTER XV

Question of dismemberment of France—King's patriotism—His letter—Terms eventually granted—Monsieur's intrigues—King's affection for Decazes—His letter to him—The Session of 1815—Ney's execution—Lavalette's escape—The ultra-Royalists—Dissolution of the "Chambre Introuvable"—Marriage of the Duc de Berry—Chateaubriand's pamphlet—The Elections—Blacas' sudden appearance in Paris—King's firmness—Painful family scenes—Vitrolles' Secret Note—Conspiracy "du bord de l'eau"—Monsieur's disgrace—Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle.

THE crisis was terrible ; for both at Berlin and at Vienna the advisability of a dismemberment of France was discussed in diplomatic circles, and even the English Cabinet considered that it might be expedient to deprive her of Louis XIV's conquests ; while the Netherlands, and the smaller States of Germany and Sardinia, were eager to seize any booty which might increase their strength and importance.

France has surely never quite realised the debt of gratitude she owes to Louis XVIII, for the firmness and patriotism with which he confronted this terrible imbroglio, when weakness and vacillation would have involved his country in ruin. The dismissal of Talleyrand had been a wise measure, for Russia was the only Power friendly to France ; and the Czar, who had formerly felt the greatest admiration for the French Foreign Minister, had been bitterly hostile to him since he had discovered the secret, and—in his opinion—treacherous, treaty formed by him with Austria and

England ; so that the presence of Talleyrand in the Cabinet had become a great hindrance to the welfare of the country. It is indeed probable that the Czar, who, as we have seen, had promised to work energetically for France's interests with the Allies if the Duc de Richelieu would consent to become Minister for Foreign Affairs, may through Pozzo di Borgo have made the removal of Talleyrand a condition of his according help to France in her present desperate condition. At any rate, when, before Talleyrand's fall, Louis XVIII at the Russian Ambassador's suggestion penned the following letter, the Russian Monarch was without doubt aware that his enemy's continuance in power would not be of long duration.

“PARIS, 11/23 *September* 1815.

“MONSIEUR MY BROTHER,—

“It is in the bitterness of my heart that I have recourse to your Imperial Majesty, to express to you openly the pain caused me by the perusal of the propositions made to my Ministry by the four united Cabinets. What affected me profoundly and makes me despair for unhappy France, is the crushing idea that your Majesty, on whom I founded my hopes, appears to have authorised the communication which has been addressed officially to me.

“You have increased my trouble even more, Sire, by expressing verbally in the interview I had yesterday with your Majesty, opinions differing little from the terms of the protocol, those terms which place me in an even more cruel situation because I had not expected them from my Allies.

“A sentiment of justice, fortified by the whole strength of my gratitude, had, in truth, convinced me

of the necessity of submitting to great sacrifices. I felt the necessity of giving up the surplus territory which had devolved on France by the Treaty of Paris ; I realised the importance of consenting to the temporary occupation of several strong places, in order to preserve the new Constitutional Government from the baleful influence of blind passions ; I could not disregard the duty of indemnifying the Powers, who had armed for the saving of my country, for the expenses of war.

“But could I ever have believed that instead of these conditions, which were already sufficiently onerous, others would be proposed to me which would join ruin to dishonour ? No, Sire, I cannot yet persuade myself that your decision can be irrevocable. The confidence inspired in me by your great and generous soul, makes me still refuse to believe the sad truth.

“But if it be otherwise ; if I have the misfortune to deceive myself ; if France cannot hope for the revocation of an edict the object of which is her degradation ; if your Majesty remains inflexible, and you refuse to use with your august Allies the influence conferred on you by virtue, friendship, and glory shared in common ; then I hesitate no longer to declare to you, Sire, that I shall refuse to be the instrument of the ruin of my people, and that I will leave the throne, rather than condescend to tarnish its ancient splendour by an unexampled abasement.

“Your Majesty will realise without doubt from the frankness of this avowal that it is founded on an immovable resolution, on the greatness of my trouble, as well as on the constancy of the feeling with which I am, etc. . . .”¹

¹ *Correspondence of Pozzo di Borgo and Nesselrode*, vol. i. p. 209.

It was owing to this letter that the Allies abandoned their first rigorous demands, which, if carried out, would, as Pozzo di Borgo remarks, have effaced France altogether from the political map of Europe.¹ Eventually, thanks to the joint endeavours of the Czar and of Richelieu, the conditions accorded to her were, though terribly heavy, not absolutely ruinous. They comprised sundry sacrifices of territory, the payment of an indemnity of seven hundred millions of francs, and the maintenance for five years of an army of occupation consisting of 150,000 men, under the command of the Duke of Wellington. During these five years France was to be in a state of tutelage, it being arranged that the representatives of the four Great Powers should meet secretly every week to discuss her internal organisation, and that, acting in unison, they should control and advise her Government, being ready to employ force if necessary, or to delay their evacuation of France should she fail to avoid the dangers of ultra-Royalism on one side, or of Imperialism or Jacobinism on the other.

The position of affairs was hard and humiliating, and some excuse may be found for the fury of the ultra-Royalists against Napoleon and his supporters, who had brought their country to the verge of ruin. Louis XVIII's anguish was great; he burst into tears as he implored the Duc de Richelieu, who loathed putting his signature as Minister for Foreign Affairs to a treaty he considered dishonouring, not to desert him at this terrible juncture.

Nevertheless, Louis XVIII's courage did not altogether desert him. "King of any other country," he said proudly, "I should have lost hope; but the

¹ *Correspondence of Pozzo di Borgo and Nesselrode*, vol. ii. p. 206.

King of France never despairs when he has to deal with Frenchmen ; let them all unite, and our misfortunes will soon be over.”¹

This recommendation was admirable ; but no one seemed in the least inclined to follow it, the country being rent by bitter dissensions, and each party implicating all other parties but itself in the mistakes which had brought the nation to the verge of ruin.

The King's worst foes were those of his household. Monsieur was absolutely impracticable. “ Make him understand once for all that the Powers are not there to support his follies, and to permit him to mount the throne with such a senseless system of reaction,”² wrote the Russian Minister Nesselrode to Pozzo di Borgo. This was again good advice, but impossible to carry into execution, for Monsieur could not or would not see the real position of affairs, and withstood and hampered his brother's Government on all occasions. He wished to form a Ministry of pure Royalists ; “ And if these gentlemen had full power,” remarked the King, “ I should myself be eventually purified away.”³

Monsieur was also most anxious to increase the influence of the priests, and if possible to reinstate the Émigrés in the possession of their estates, while indemnifying the present occupiers. It was in vain that the King, Pozzo di Borgo, and Wellington interviewed him at different times, and tried to inculcate wisdom ; he had forgotten nothing and had learnt nothing from the march of events ; he was determined to make France return to the reign of the Ancien Régime.

¹ See Crousaz-Crétét, *Life of Richelieu*, p. 179.

² *Correspondence of Pozzo di Borgo and of Nesselrode*, vol. i p. 313.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

During a conversation with him, the Duke of Wellington, who was astonished at this infatuation, said : “ In this case you take me for an idiot, for it is my business to study France, and your Royal Highness evidently supposes that I do not realise her feelings or her condition.” Monsieur answered cheerfully : “ You foreigners do not understand men ; I am better informed, and my party is certainly the strongest ” ; and it was in vain that the Duke of Wellington, at the end of his resources in the way of argument, remarked that he had supposed himself to be speaking to the successor to the throne, and not to the chief of a faction or a party.¹

Louis XVIII's position was isolated and beset with thorns. From all sides warnings reached him about the dangers into which Monsieur was hurrying the country, yet the unfortunate King was powerless to prevent the continual intrigues with which his brother surrounded himself, while he knew that if ultra-Royalism and its concomitant disturbances were to gain ground, there was fear that the Allies would interfere, and that the foreign invasion which irritated the country almost past bearing, would be continued past the specified time. Therefore he opposed Monsieur firmly, in spite of the sorrowful looks, the remonstrances, and the Cassandra-like prophecies of his family, who considered that he was conducting them to ruin. His frequent attacks of gout, accompanied by fever, gave much cause for alarm to the friends of France, in view of Monsieur's complete incapacity for reigning over the country ; and the weakness of his health, combined with his loneliness, and the continual petty persecution to which he was subjected, must surely have caused him eventually to

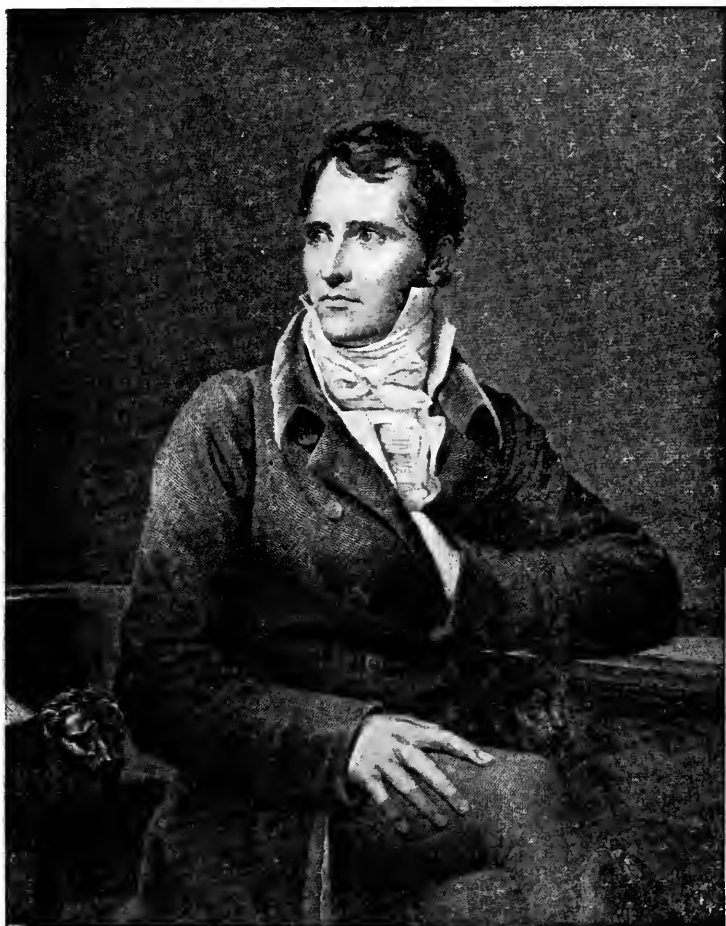
¹ *Pozzo di Borgo Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 125.

bow to Monsieur's determined will, had he not most fortunately begun to feel a warm attachment for his young Minister of Police.

This attachment grew apace, and Decazes soon became the King's "dear son," to whom he confided all his troubles, and with whom he interchanged thoughts and feelings, and discussed questions of policy. There was a certain sentimentality about this friendship; in his letters the King was "ton Louis," the Comte d'Artois was styled Decazes' "uncle," and the Duc d'Angoulême was indicated by the abbreviation Sp., which stood for *Spesima*.

The King's affection for his young favourite was truly fatherly, as it caused him to be most unselfishly anxious for his happiness. The young Minister of Police had been left a widower after a few months of married life, and Louis XVIII arranged with his sister Madame Princeteau, whom he called "the good angel," a grand alliance for his benefit; and brought about a marriage between him and Mademoiselle Saint-Aulaire, who at sixteen years of age was one of the greatest matches in France. The King was not, however, blindly subservient to Decazes, often pursuing his own policy in opposition to that of his favourite.

Naturally, however, Decazes wielded a strong influence over him, and this increased as time went on, though it showed itself less decidedly in initiating any particular policy, than in supporting the King in the painful work of carrying on the policy dictated by his own sagacity. Naturally also the Royal Family hated the new favourite even more bitterly than they had detested Blacas, whose political views had at least been identical with their own. Some of the King's



From an engraving by P. Toschi, after a painting by F. Gérard.

THE COMTE DECAZES.

p. 294]

confidential letters to Decazes give an amusing account of the position of affairs. In one of them he says :

March 7, 1819.

“ I feel well, my dear son, but my morning has not been cheerful. In the first place, Sp.’s half [the Duchesse d’Angoulême] was looking even sadder than yesterday, and all the other faces were the same. Your Uncle [Monsieur] looked as he did yesterday. He has not announced that he intends to pay me a visit ; I suppose he is reserving himself for to-morrow, between the time when every one leaves, and when I have to receive the ladies. Anglès has just gone out, blacker than his hat, announcing misfortunes on all sides, particularly the terrible elections at Grenoble, but allowing that all the harm has come from Barthélémy’s proposition. I told him that with strength and determination there would be nothing to fear. But this has taken me away from my morning ; I come back to it. I have seen him [the Duc de Berry, whose impulsive and irresponsible sayings and doings often caused him to be in disgrace with the King]. I was cold. Nevertheless I spoke to him, but as I do to everybody. I asked him for a pinch of snuff, but only one, while I generally ask for several ; and yet God knows that his snuff never was as good as to-day. I do not know whether he was piqued by my coldness, or whether his conscience pricked him (his character makes one or the other supposition equally probable), but he did not, as he does always, come near me, and when I dismissed the company, he hurried out, as he never does. I will not hide from you the fact that it cost me sorrow to act in this way, and that when I was alone I found my eyes wet ; but one must rise superior to these

weaknesses, and I think that now the thing is once marked, it will be necessary for him to approach me before we kill the fatted calf, or shake the dust off our feet, according to the line he takes. To express myself more clearly, I think that to-morrow he will ask for an explanation, and that this must not be put off.”¹

The letter continues in the same confidential strain, treating of the minutest details of the King's intercourse with each person he meets, and of his views and feelings on every subject which comes up ; so that it can easily be seen that though Decazes was—unlike Blacas—tactful, conciliatory, discreet, and possessed the gift of managing men, it was impossible, from the peculiar exigencies of his position, for him to avoid arousing the most bitter hatred among the King's relations.

The full force of this hostility was only, however, to show itself later ; in 1815, the burning question of the day was centred in the great struggle between Richelieu, Decazes, and the rest of the Ministry of moderates, supported not only by the King, but by the representatives of the great European Powers ; and a reactionary and strongly ultra-Royalist Chamber of Deputies.

Of the four measures discussed during the Session of 1815, the most important treated of proposed exceptions to the law of general amnesty for political offences. These exceptions the King and the Ministry were anxious to make as few as possible, while the ultra-Royalists clamoured for blood. “The Hundred Days are costing us more than eighteen hundred millions,” said one of their number, “and what have we got for

¹ See *Pièces Historiques*, Ernest Daudet : “Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes,” p. 451.

all that? The heads of two men, and those only with much trouble.”¹ The two heads sacrificed were those of Maréchal Ney and Monsieur Labédoyère.

The Maréchal, who had promised the King to bring Napoleon back in an iron cage and then had deserted to him, was without doubt, strictly speaking, a traitor, and it is difficult to see how his execution, which was demanded by the Allies, could have been prevented. Nevertheless, his death was a great misfortune to the Bourbon cause, and the King was no doubt right when, on hearing the news of his capture, he said, “Wretched man! In letting himself be caught, he is going to do us more harm than he did when he went over to Bonaparte on March 13th!”²

As the regicide Fouché not only escaped punishment, but was rewarded by a seat in the Ministry, it seemed a strange anomaly that the man who was known by Napoleon as the “brave des braves,” should lose his life for the impulse by which he yielded to the overmastering power exercised by Napoleon over those who had served under him. The King realised that it was weakness, and not deliberate treachery, which had caused Ney’s defection, and would have liked to save him; but did not dare to do this, fearing that the ultra-Royalists might, in their fury, wreck the Ministry; and that if they were to succeed in seizing the reins of government, the Allies would, in fear of their extravagances, refuse to rid France of the presence of the foreign armies. “Ney went out of my room faithful to me; he intended to be faithful to the end,” he said, “but circumstances were too strong for him.”³

¹ Trans. *de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 179.

² Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

It must be remembered, however, that in the eyes of the ultra-Royalists, the Hundred Days had not been the irresistible rush of a discontented and disappointed Army towards an adored leader, but the result of a carefully prepared conspiracy, ramifications of which spread over the country, and were deeply rooted. They were hysterical with terror and indignation, and they craved for exemplary punishment on their enemies. The drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain were specially pitiless; and women in particular vied with each other in the sanguinary violence of their language. It was impossible to save the Maréchal, and an attempt to induce the Duke of Wellington to interfere on his behalf was unavailing. When the Clerk of the Court read his sentence to him, and began to enumerate all his titles: "Leave them out," said the Maréchal, "say simply Michel Ney, soon to become a little dust." He was executed on December 7th, 1815.

Still the ultra-Royalist thirst for blood was unslaked. The Comte de Lavalette, who had been Postmaster-General to Napoleon, and had resumed his functions during the Hundred Days, was on trial for his life, and Richelieu and Decazes did all they could to induce the King to interpose on his behalf. Before his arrest, Decazes had tried to warn him to leave the country; but, sharing with Ney, Labédoyère, and with others of that day, a foolhardiness which possibly had its origin in a sense of the fleeting and uncertain condition of the Government, he had refused to avail himself of the opportunity for escape held out to him. Now he was condemned to die; and though the King had been persuaded to grant Madame de Lavalette an interview, he could hold out to her no hope of saving her husband's life. The ultra-Royalists were so strong

that it was necessary to appease them by the sacrifice of some victims, but the King was determined to make them as few as possible. "Find some way so that the Chamber of Deputies shall not embarrass us about it, and I will grant his pardon,"¹ he said. Decazes then proposed that the Duchesse d'Angoulême should be persuaded to intercede for the prisoner, hoping that her mediation might silence the clamours of the ultras. When approached by the Duke de Richelieu on the subject, she showed evident emotion, and promised to ask the King after lunch on the same day for Lavalette's pardon. However, during the interval, the ultra-Royalists persuaded her not to interfere, and she said nothing. When the Duc de Richelieu came to the King the next day, he found him waiting anxiously, and his first words were :

"Well, my niece never spoke ; you must have misunderstood her."

"No, Sire ; I had her absolute promise."

"Go and see her then, and try to induce her to act. I will wait till she is ready to come."²

But the Princess never appeared, and even tore herself roughly from the grasp of the unfortunate Madame de Lavalette, who waited to see her on her way from Mass. The ultra-Royalists now felt certain of their prey, and a howl of execration greeted the news that Lavalette, assisted by his heroic wife, had escaped from prison.

"Little wretch !" cried one of the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain when she heard that Mademoiselle de Lavalette had helped to save her father.

"You will see that they will say that it is we who

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 232.

² *Trans. de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 109.

have done it,"¹ was the King's comment when he heard the news ; and, as usual, he was right.

"My sisters, who see a great many Deputies," writes Richelieu to Decazes, "tell me that they are enchanted with what has happened, as it has given them, they say, a good opportunity of falling on the Ministry, especially on you and the Keeper of the Seals."² Speaking of the measure of general amnesty which the Ministry had brought forward directly after Ney's execution, the Duc de Richelieu continues :

"They announce that the law on amnesty will only pass when amended as they choose, and that the law of elections will be crossed out altogether. We shall be crossed out, too, shortly, and can congratulate or condole together about it as you prefer. But my fate will be the same as yours."

The situation was curious, for the so-called ultra-Royalists were hardly Royalists at all, but were a compact body fighting against King, Ministry, and the great moderate mass of the nation, with the object of getting the power into their own hands. Ostensibly they wished to return to the old order of things, but often the methods they employed were revolutionary ; and sometimes they were by some strange anomaly apparently the defenders of freedom, while the Ministry, its real supporters, appeared to circumscribe it.

Meanwhile, the distracted country was harassed by the harshness of foreign troops, and the "White Terror" was still in progress in the provinces, where risings among the Bonapartists and supposed Revolutionaries were exaggerated, and then punished with exemplary severity

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 102.

² *Ibid.*

by the agency of the ultra-Royalists. One victory was won by the moderates : they passed the law of general amnesty ; but, on the other hand, the ultra-Royalists brought into force a measure ordering the restitution of any ecclesiastical property which was not already sold, thus returning to the spirit of the Ancien Régime, and inflicting a crushing defeat on the Ministry, who had wished to relieve the necessities of the clergy by paying them a yearly pension. The ultras celebrated their victory by insulting the President of the Chamber, Monsieur Lainé, and disputing his authority on a point of order, so that he felt obliged to retire from his position.

On April 29th, 1816, the turbulent Session came to an end ; and the opening of the next Session was fixed for October 1. However, the representatives of the Great Powers were becoming uneasy at the extravagances by which the ultra-Royalists kept the country in a turmoil ; and secretly the possibility of a dissolution of the unruly Chamber began to be mooted abroad. The Czar wrote most decidedly advising it ; the Duke of Wellington despatched a letter to the King in which he said that the scenes which passed in the Chamber of Deputies were known to all the world, and that the King's Ministers, though possessing his entire confidence, were completely without influence there. In writing this the Duke knew the King to be fully aware of these facts, but wished to strengthen his hands. The idea of infuriating his family was most painful to Louis XVIII, and when told by Decazes that he must assert his Royal authority towards his brother, he said rather piteously :

"You talk about it quite at your ease ; you think it easy to act as King with your brother, when as

children you have slept in the same bed.”¹ Decazes was exerting all his influence to bring about a dissolution ; and at first it was necessary not only to persuade the King, but also to induce the reluctant Richelieu and Lainé to recognise that it was impossible for the Government of the country to be carried on successfully, while the Ministry were continually harassed by the attacks of the ultra-Royalists.

Before making up his mind, the King considered the matter carefully from all points of view, and wrote letters to Decazes discoursing lengthily of the advantages and disadvantages of the different courses practicable. In his opinion there were three ; the first being to reduce the number of Deputies—which had been increased at the second Restoration—to what was prescribed by the Charter ; the second, to dissolve the Chamber before the time for its reunion ; and the third, to meet the battle, and to treat the Chamber with severity or not according to its own behaviour. To the third course the King was evidently most inclined, but Decazes was firm ; for in his opinion no stability, public confidence, relief from foreign armies, or prestige in Europe were possible with the present Chamber in power. The Ministers were by this time ranged on his side ; and at the Council held on August 20th, 1816, they added their persuasions to his. The matter was kept absolutely secret till September 5th, when the King signed the order known as “The Ordinance of the 5th of September,” which dissolved the Chamber, and reduced the Deputies to the number prescribed by the Charter.

Monsieur knew nothing of what was pending ; and was only informed of the catastrophe when the Duc

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 121.

de Richelieu went at eleven o'clock at night, after the King had signed the document, to tell him what had been done. Horrified at the news, he wished at once to remonstrate with the King; but the latter, with a cowardice for which we can hardly blame him, had gone to bed, and had given orders that he was not to be disturbed. Therefore Monsieur did not see his brother till the next day, when, accompanied by the Duchesse d'Angoulême, he paid him a visit. Nothing was said on the burning subject; but the intense sadness of the visitors must have been depressing. However, both the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berry wrote to the King expressing their satisfaction at his action, so Louis XVIII received some support from his family, though it was not of much avail against the opposition of Monsieur and of Madame.

The Duc de Berry had at last become a married man. To the Czar's intense disappointment, the negotiations to give him a Russian Grand Duchess as wife had fallen through; but at Fontainebleau, on June 17th, 1816, his nuptials were celebrated with Caroline, daughter of the King of Naples.

The newly made Duchesse de Berry was very tiny, and though not pretty, had a beautiful complexion and lovely hair. She was so ignorant that when she arrived in France she could hardly read. The King paid little attention to her, the Duc de Berry was kind to her, but treated her like a child, and showed no intention of abandoning the dissipated life he was leading, while the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who tried to control and advise her, and whose manners were, as we know, far from conciliatory, soon earned the violent dislike of the headstrong young Princess.

The news of the dissolution of the Chamber was received with relief by the majority of the nation, but by the ultra-Royalists with a fury to which Chateaubriand gave expression in his pamphlet *De la Monarchie selon la Charte*, the major part of which had been composed before the ordinance of September 5th ; but to which he now added a postscript accusing the King of being forced into his action against his will, and of really desiring the return of ultra-Royalist Deputies at the next election. This view of his conduct naturally excited the King's indignation, and Chateaubriand was warned that the pamphlet must not be published, but refused to listen to the recommendation. Therefore, as before sending it to the printer he had not performed the necessary formalities, Decazes ordered it to be seized. This action was unwise, as the King saw clearly.

"Do you flatter yourself," he wrote to Decazes, "that you have completely stopped the publication of Chateaubriand's work? That is an illusion. I will show you the impossibility of doing it. Any author, who is not obliged like Collet to depend on a successful sonnet for his dinner, always begins by putting aside a certain number of copies intended for important people, such as friends and protectors ; after that the work is put on sale. That would happen on this occasion, and has happened, I have no doubt, and for this reason I think that if you had consulted me before ordering the seizure I should have dissuaded you from it.

"It is not that it was not a legal measure, for the Testament itself, thus published, would have been liable to seizure. I shall say that to whoever speaks to me about it, were it even the Duc de Berry or

Lainé. But, to you alone, I should have said yesterday evening if I had had time, and I say to-day, that people generally will not look at the matter in this light, that they will consider the printer's mistake merely a pretext, and that I fear the poison contained in the book will spread all the more, because of the favour which a varnish of persecution gives to men and to things. I might have spared myself the trouble of saying all this, since what is done is done, but friendship would reproach me for not thinking aloud. Let us hope that the remedy will cure the disease."¹

The Duc de Berry, impulsive and undependable as ever, had now completely veered round to the ultra-Royalist side, and exclaimed, speaking of Chateaubriand's production :

"That book ought to be written in letters of gold."

Considering the fact that the King was very thoroughly acquainted with his nephew's character, his sensitiveness about the utterances of that most wayward Prince is rather astonishing. Writing to Decazes anent the redoubtable pamphlet, he says :

"I was far from foreseeing the harm it would do to me personally. 'This book ought to be written in letters of gold.' Oh, since I have known this, it is written in my heart in letters of blood. I cannot cease to love the mistaken fellow who said these cruel words. But I am afraid of losing my self-control with the person who has separated him so completely from me."²

The election for the Chamber of Deputies caused much excitement throughout the country ; and Monsieur's agents worked incessantly to return ultra-Royalists, who, to alarm him, had started the report

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 161.

² *Ibid.*

that he was not to be allowed to succeed his brother on the throne. Eventually the Ministerial party obtained a majority of forty to fifty in the Chamber of Deputies, and Richelieu's fear that the Revolutionaries would be in the ascendant was not fulfilled; while, partly as the result of their satisfaction at the disappearance of the "Chambre Introuvable," the Allies were induced by him to diminish the army of occupation by one-fifth.

All this was most satisfactory, but there were signs that the comparatively peaceful state of affairs would not be of long duration. Many enemies were rising round Decazes, and conspicuous among them was Talleyrand, the man of no feeling, to whom those around him were only pawns to be used in the complicated game he played for his own advancement. For his own purposes he had brought Decazes forward, but now that the latter and the Ministry of which he was a member were waxing overpowerful, the fallen Minister joined with the ultra-Royalists in trying to pit against him the old favourite, whom hardly two years earlier they had hounded from the kingdom.

Much is mysterious about the matter, but on April 15th, 1817, Blacas left Rome, and, travelling under the name of his valet, arrived on the 22nd at an hotel in Paris. He at once wrote to the King to say that, being unable to stifle the yearnings of his heart, he had come to Paris merely to see his Majesty again, and to hear his voice.

The King, who was displeased at this infringement of ambassadorial etiquette, gave the dry verbal answer: "I only receive ambassadors when introduced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs." Blacas was therefore obliged to call upon the Duc de Richelieu, who asked

if he had been summoned by the King, and on receiving a negative answer suspected an intrigue. However, he consented to conduct Blacas to his Majesty, and entered the King's room with him, saying: "Sire, I present to your Majesty a traveller in a frock coat."

"Ah! it is Blacas!" cried the King, whose face had at once brightened.

"Blacas had thrown himself at his feet, kissing his hands; tears were in his eyes, and he showed by his words and gestures the most lively emotion."¹

Madame de Boigne tells us² that Richelieu and Blacas followed the King in to lunch, and says:

"Surprise and embarrassment were general at the appearance of Monsieur de Blacas, who was thought to be at Rome. Eyes were turned upon the King's face to discover in what way the Ambassador should be received, but the King's expression was impassive. The presence of Monsieur de Richelieu was an embarrassment to those who would have liked to show the hopes which they possibly felt.

"Every one, according to custom, had assembled, when Madame arrived, preceded by a little bitch which Monsieur de Blacas had formerly given her. The animal jumped up to its former master and fawned upon him.

"'Poor Thisbe!' said the King. 'I am pleased to see that she remembers you so well.'

"The Duc d'Havr e leaned over to his neighbour and said in his ear: 'We must follow Thisbe's example without hesitation.'

"Monsieur de Blacas was then surrounded with the most affectionate demonstrations. Madame showed no

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 182.

² *Trans. de Boigne M moires*, p. 207.

greater surprise than the King, but received Monsieur de Blacas with great kindness. Doubtless she was not unaware of the intrigue which was in progress. The Duc d'Angoulême lunched somewhat later than the King, and when the Princess left her Uncle's apartments she used to come in at the end of the Duke's meal and eat one or two grapes every day. To-day she announced the arrival of Monsieur de Blacas.

“ ‘So much the worse,’ replied the Duc d'Angoulême drily. She made no answer.”

As usual, the different members of the Royal Family did not see matters in the same light ; but at first the intriguers were full of delighted hope as to the success of their scheme. Blacas was reinstated in his old apartments at the Tuileries, used the Court carriages, could go to see the King whenever he pleased, and came out from long audiences smiling triumphantly. The foreign Ministers disapproved strongly of the state of affairs, seeing in Blacas' ascendancy an augury of the reversal of the policy under which France was becoming settled and prosperous ; but Talleyrand, Chateaubriand, Vitrolles, and all the ultra-Royalists rejoiced extremely.

It was decided by Richelieu and Decazes that Blacas must leave Paris speedily, and Richelieu undertook to approach the King about the matter. The King assured his Minister that he had never authorised Blacas' departure from Rome, and Richelieu could easily gather that, though Louis XVIII still felt warm affection for his former favourite and was most anxious not to hurt his feelings, he found his presence embarrassing, and would be relieved at his departure. It was also evident that he was determined to uphold his Ministers with the utmost loyalty, and the disappointed Blacas was forced to return to his post in Rome, where he



From an engraving by F. Lignon, after a painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

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was engaged in negotiations with the Pope about a new Concordat.

The King also supported his Ministry in the reforms which the Maréchal Gouvion Saint-Cyr, the new Minister for War, was trying to introduce into the Army, where he wished to bring in a modified form of conscription, to do away with the favouritism of promotion by Royal Order, and to make it the result of seniority. The first of these measures was absolutely necessary if France was to be provided with an adequate Army, and the second equally necessary if that Army was to represent the country as a whole ; but both were disputed violently by the ultra-Royalists, and Monsieur wrote to the King pointing out the danger of these measures as infringing on the rights of the Crown, and also attacking the policy of the Ministry, which would, he said, lead the King and country to destruction. The King was very angry at this criticism, which he would not allow Monsieur to publish, as the latter had intended to do. In his letter back, Louis XVIII said :

“The system I have adopted, and which my Ministers follow with perseverance, is founded on the maxim that it is impossible to reign over two peoples, and all the efforts of my Government tend to arrange that these two peoples, who exist only too decidedly, shall end by becoming one.”¹

The King added that he was in complete accord with his Ministers on everything, and that his firmness would triumph over Monsieur's opposition.

“But,” he continues, “I cannot imagine without shuddering the moment when I shall close my eyes. You will then find yourself between two parties, one of

¹ Crousaz-Crétét, *Life of the Duc de Richelieu*, p. 270.

which already considers itself oppressed by me, while the other will fear the same thing from you. Conclusion, —a civil war, and a future of divisions, troubles, and calamities.”

Relations were terribly strained at this time between the King and his family, and Madame de Boigne tells us of a painful scene after the Duc de Berry had canvassed at his evening parties for supporters against the Government. “The King was informed of the fact, sent for him, and rated him soundly. The Duc de Berry complained to his sister-in-law. They discussed their grievances in common, and lashed themselves to fury in the process ; at length, in the evening after dinner, Monsieur proceeded to expound their views in no measured terms. The King replied with vigour. Madame and the Duc de Berry intervened, and the quarrel rose to such a pitch that Monsieur declared he would leave the Court with his children. The King replied that there were fortresses for rebellious Princes. Monsieur answered that the Charter did not provide for State prisons—the unfortunate Charter being constantly invoked by those who hated it most bitterly—and on these friendly terms they parted.

The Duc d’Angoulême had been the only member of the family to keep silence. His respect for his father balanced his respect for the King, so that he would not have felt justified in pronouncing in favour of either party. When once their anger had subsided, all regretted the violence of their language. The poor King wept when he told his Ministers of the scene in the evening. He had, however, been so shaken that he was unable to digest his dinner. An attack of gout in the stomach supervened, his breathing failed almost entirely in the night, and he was ill for several

days afterwards. His family seized the opportunity for a display of affection, in which he pretended to believe in order to gain a little peace, but for which he really cared very little. The public were as well aware as the King of the opposition which the Princes had offered, and the jest of the moment was to call the black balls in the ballot-box "Monsieur's prunes."¹

Monsieur was at this time particularly active. It had been settled that in September 1818 the Great Powers should hold a Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle, to discuss, among other things, the possibility of the foreign troops at once evacuating France, instead of waiting till the five years mentioned in the Convention should have elapsed. With Monsieur's knowledge, his friend Vitrolles took the extraordinary and unpatriotic course of writing a secret Note to the Powers, begging them not to leave France while the King was governed by a Revolutionary Ministry. Instead of this Note being shown to the Great Powers—when, if they had given credit to it, they might have delayed their evacuation of the country—it was made public in France, and the intriguing Vitrolles lost his position as Minister of State. About the same time the conspiracy known as "Du bord de l'Eau" was discovered, by which the Ministers were to be kidnapped, and the King apparently forcibly provided with a purely Royalist Cabinet. To this conspiracy it was suspected that Monsieur was privy, and his influence was felt to be so pernicious, that the post of Colonel-General of the National Guard, which he had held since 1814, was summarily suppressed. Monsieur was furious at his disgrace; but the King was determined.

The King and his Ministers were now reaping the

¹ Trans. *de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. ii, p. 199.

first-fruits of their prudent and moderate policy. Richelieu's great ambition was that the Great Powers should decide to receive France again on terms of equality. The Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was opened on September 30th, 1818, and to the intense joy of every patriot, it was determined that by November 30th the foreign troops should have evacuated France; while, after the Czar had visited Paris and had had an interview with Louis XVIII, France was again admitted into the Concert of European Powers.

Louis XVIII and Richelieu had certainly deserved well of their country.

"I have lived long enough," said the King, "since I have seen France free, and the French flag flying over every French town!"

CHAPTER XVI

Divisions between Richelieu and Decazes—Louis XVIII's view of the situation—Ultra-Royalist tactics—Question of retirement of Decazes—Richelieu resigns—Formation of the Cabinet Dessoles-Decazes—Difficulties—The King's sentiments—His family difficulties—His kindness to Madame Decazes—The "Loi Barthélemy"—Triumph of the ultras—Creation of new peers—Cabinet harassed by ultra-liberals—Grégoire's election—Decazes proposes alteration in election laws—Assassination of the Duc de Berry—Fury of the ultra-Royalists against Decazes—The Royal Family implore the King to dismiss him—Retirement of Decazes—Richelieu becomes head of the Cabinet—The King's grief—Disappointment of the Duc de Castries.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1818, when the Duc de Richelieu returned triumphantly from the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, his Ministry appeared at a cursory glance to be strongly established and prosperous. To any one who understood the inner workings of the Cabinet, however, the outlook was less favourable, for Richelieu and Decazes, the two principal members of it, were every month becoming more divided in aims and in policy. Richelieu had returned from the Congress imbued with dread of a renewal of revolution in France, a dread intensified by the fact that a certain number of Jacobin and Bonapartist Deputies had been returned at the elections which had taken place during his stay at Aix-la-Chapelle. He was therefore most anxious to conciliate Monsieur and his party, and urged the necessity of this on

Decazes ; though he allowed that the latter would be more than a man, if he were not influenced in his feelings by the outrages rained on him by certain madmen among the ultras. Decazes, on the other hand, exasperated by the violent hatred shown him by the ultra-Royalists, was inclining decidedly to the liberals, and especially towards the party known as the "doctrinaires," or, in ridicule, as the "petit ministère," because of its supposed power in the Cabinet. This party, which contained in its ranks distinguished men such as Guizot and Barante, was considered by the ultra-Royalists to be most dangerous in its proclivities.

"To support the Restoration by contending against the reaction, was at first its whole policy,"¹ says Guizot.

Naturally optimistic, and with full confidence in his own gift of managing men, as well as in his power over the King, Decazes seems to have underestimated the strength of his enemies ; while Richelieu, on the other hand, being devoid of ambition, and hating the political task forced on him by his patriotism and sense of duty, was apt to look on the gloomy side of things, and was easily prone to despair. It was in vain that Decazes tried to minimise the significance of the seats won by the Jacobins and the Bonapartists ; he refused to be comforted.

"My future appears to me in the blackest colours," he writes to Decazes, "for if everything goes badly it will be impossible to leave, and to remain would be a hundred times worse than death to me."²

Louis XVIII viewed the situation from a more cheerful, and possibly a more common-sense, standpoint than

¹ *Mémoires*, p. 115.

² Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 283.

did his First Minister. In the curious account he has written of the crisis in the Cabinet,¹ he says :

“ Some of the elections displeased me, such as those of La Sarthe, La Vendée, and Finistère ; but these are annoyances incidental to a Constitution like ours, and the greater number were good.” The King also remarks that there was nothing specially threatening about the Session which was about to open, for order and confidence had been restored, France was respected abroad, and although lively debates would no doubt take place in the Chamber, he considered that the Government would keep a considerable majority. From a letter the King wrote to Decazes, we learn that he did not agree with Richelieu’s views on the possibility of reforming Monsieur.

“ I have undoubtedly a good opinion of your power of pleasing and of persuading, my dear son, but I do not share Richelieu’s opinion of the facility you will have in converting your Uncle, and I consider that Sp.’s example proves nothing ” ; and the King summed up the matter bitterly by saying that his nephew was not afflicted, like his brother, by the terrible and incorrigible malady of the “ desire to reign.”²

Meanwhile, Decazes had other anxieties besides those caused by the constant opposition of the ultra-Royalists. He objected to his position of Minister of Police, considering it slightly beneath his dignity, besides being an anachronism under a constitutional monarchy, and his friends wished to substitute him for Lainé as Minister of the Interior. This was, however, impossible, as Lainé declared that if deprived of his post he would retire into private life altogether ; and Richelieu had

¹ Given in Book xxxv. of Lamartine’s *Histoire de la Restauration*.

² Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 279.

always announced that he would not remain in the Cabinet without him. Decazes was also anxious about the dangers of democracy; for a sentence in the King's Speech which caused a great sensation when he opened the Chambers on December 10th, 1818, came from his pen. It ran as follows:

"I count on your help to repulse the pernicious principles which, under the mask of liberty, attack social order, and lead by anarchy to absolute power; while their unfortunate success has cost the world much blood and many tears."

In spite of these sentiments, Louis XVIII was much disturbed by the discovery that Richelieu had, unknown to him, been negotiating with the ultra-Royalist contingent, and had even discussed with them an alteration of the law of elections, by which the whole of the Chamber, instead of a fifth part, should be renewed every five years; while a law limiting the liberty of the press was to be passed at the same time.

According to the Duchesse Decazes, Richelieu had been persuaded to take this line, and had been influenced against Decazes by Molé, the Minister of Marine.

The King was deeply injured at this want of confidence on the part of his President of the Council:

"Never," he says, "will posterity believe that a Minister, whoever he may be, could conceive, and even put into execution, a plan the effect of which would be to change the whole course of the government, without saying a single word about it to the King. It will be even less believed when it is known that the Minister was the Duc de Richelieu, the most loyal man who has ever existed, and the King, that Louis XVIII, who has been accused of weakness, but not of indiscretion,

so that it might have been considered easy, while keeping the plan secret, to try to make him change his opinion."

In his confidential letters to Decazes, the King characterises Molé most severely :

"This serpent," he says, "will have conceived some fresh treason of which we shall feel the effects."¹

Remembering, however, the debt of gratitude France owed Richelieu for the concessions he had wrung from the Allies at Aix-la-Chapelle, Louis XVIII was determined not to break with him ; and he therefore pretended to be unaware of his dallings with the reactionary party, and looked on with apparent equanimity while his brother's party gained victory after victory. Ultra-Royalists were chosen for the Bureau of the Chamber of Peers, ultra-Royalists formed the Commission for the Address, an ultra-Royalist was made President of the Chamber of Deputies, and Richelieu would not see Decazes, and did not answer his letters. However, the tide soon turned, for while the ultra-Royalists were rejoicing in the expectation of coming triumph, the Chamber of Deputies declared its views by choosing moderates and liberals for its Secretaries, among them being the Comte de Saint-Aulaire, father-in-law to Decazes.

This action hurried the catastrophe, as Richelieu on this occasion spoke bitterly of Decazes to the King, and accused him of influencing these elections. The King was suffering from one of his frequent attacks of gout, brought about very probably by anxiety and worry. In his account of these events he says :

"May I here be permitted to speak of the state

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 292.

of my health, not in order to be pitied, but as an excuse for mistakes I may have made in these difficult circumstances? On the 12th I felt an attack of gout; during three days it was so slight that I thought it would be nothing, but on the evening of the 15th the pains became very severe, and on the 16th an attack began which I will describe in a few words; great suffering, little sleep, no appetite, fever, and prostration of physical and mental strength. This was my condition for over eight days."

It was during this illness that the King received the resignations of Richelieu, Molé, and Lainé, followed the next day by those of Decazes and Pasquier. His trouble can easily be imagined.

"My dear son, your Father is very unhappy," he wrote to Decazes, "but he only feels the more deeply how much he loves you."

On receiving the resignations of his Ministers, the King at once wrote to Richelieu, begging him to decide nothing definitely before seeing him.

Richelieu found his Royal Master in a state of extreme agitation and sorrow, convinced that, in case of his withdrawal, the only possible course was the hated one of calling upon Talleyrand to form a Ministry. Touched by his trouble, Richelieu wrote after this interview to offer to remain at the head of affairs if Decazes were excluded from the Ministry, and were sent at once as Ambassador to Naples or to St. Petersburg. Richelieu said in his letter that he "loved and esteemed" Decazes, but that as long as the latter remained in France, the liberal party would consider him the aim of their hopes, while it would be impossible for the ultra-Royalists, whose imprudences had, he allowed, caused untold harm, to

join the Ministry while the man whom they hated was a member of it, and that, therefore, in spite of himself, Decazes would become an obstacle to the Government.

This letter was a terrible shock to the King.

“Be reconciled with the ultras!” he cried :
“What a disgrace! And perhaps a useless disgrace!”

However, patriotism and the fear of being forced to have recourse to Talleyrand prevailed over pride and personal affection, and the King told Decazes of Richelieu’s ultimatum in a letter which he finished with the words :

“But I wish I were dead, O my son !”

Decazes was horrified at the idea of making a long journey with his delicate and ailing wife, and he begged that this cruel condition might at least be removed, and that he might be allowed to remain in France if he promised to retire into the country. Richelieu was at first inexorable ; but, a little later, better thoughts prevailed, and he limited his conditions to a few months’ sojourn in the country.

Now fresh difficulties supervened, for the different members of the Ministry objected strongly to any change in the elections laws ; while several of them refused to remain in the Cabinet unless Decazes were a member of it. Richelieu, therefore, for a second time sent in his resignation, and proposed to the King to have recourse to Decazes for forming a fresh Ministry.

The King assented without enthusiasm, for he saw plainly that in the present state of affairs, a retirement for a time from the political arena would really be to the interest of Decazes. In the end, the Cabinet Dessoles-Decazes was formed, General Dessoles becoming President of the Council and Foreign Minister,

while Decazes at last held the coveted post of Minister of the Interior, the Maréchal Gouvion Saint-Cyr kept that of Minister of War, and the Baron Louis took his old post of Minister of Finance.

In spite of their late contentions, Richelieu and Decazes felt a warm affection for each other, and knowing that Richelieu had lost all his property during the Revolution, and was leaving office a poor man, Decazes tried to obtain for him a permanent income from the Treasury. This the country certainly owed him for the ability he had shown at Aix-la-Chapelle, when he had shortened the occupation of the country by foreign troops, and had thus saved France an enormous sum of money. The ultra-Royalists, however, were so furious at this proposal, and made so many offensive remarks about it that, having accepted the grant out of respect to the King, Richelieu gave it to the Bordeaux hospitals. Decazes then managed to have the sinecure post of Grand Mastership of the Hounds conferred on his friend, and Richelieu wrote to him on this occasion:

“A thousand thanks for the rapid effects of your friendship. I am extremely glad and grateful.” He finishes his letter with the words: “Receive here, with all my thanks, the assurance of my constant and tender friendship, and that of my very sincere wishes for your success. Write to me sometimes about yourself.”¹

Decazes now seemed to be at the height of his ambition, but the virulent hatred of his enemies increased with his success. Madame de Boigne tells a story which shows the almost incredible insolence of the ultras. She had just returned from England, and was talking with some friends at a party given by Madame de Duras, when she saw Decazes' sister,

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 311.

Madame Princeteau, and went up to speak to her. Her friends at once left her, and when she rejoined them, they said :

“We admire your courage in speaking to Madame Princeteau in the presence of the Israelites.”

“Oh, it is only the courage of ignorance ; if she had been here a week she would not dare.”

“But how can I be so rude as to pass her without a word ? I am dining with her brother to-morrow.”

“That does not matter ; people go to the Minister’s house, but do not speak either to Madame Princeteau or even to Monsieur Decazes when they meet them elsewhere.”¹

Decazes was in a changed position in this new Cabinet, as he, with Portal and eventually the Maréchal Gouvion Saint-Cyr, formed the moderate section of it ; while Dessoles, de Serre, and the Baron Louis inclined more decidedly to the left or liberal party.

Decazes still tried to carry out faithfully Louis XVIII’s words :

“Let us walk between the right and the left, holding out our hands to them both, and saying that whoever is not against us is with us.”²

The King was rather uneasy at the tendencies of the new Cabinet, but he objected to following Decazes’ proposed plan of appointing Pasquier, a man of moderate opinions, as seventh Minister, with the object of ensuring a majority of moderates ; and preferred to depend on the Royal prerogative. In a curious passage, he gives his opinion on the position of Royalty in a constitutional Government :

“My will should be everything. The responsible

¹ Trans. *de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 182.

² Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 314.

Ministers say to the King, 'This is our opinion. The King answers: 'This is my will.' If the Ministers, after having reflected, think they will not risk too much in following his will, they follow it. If it be otherwise, they declare they cannot. Then, if the King cannot do without his Ministers, he gives in. In the contrary case, he takes others."¹

Louis XVIII preserved a dignified and courteous demeanour to all his Ministers; but, though he was most anxious to give the Cabinet every chance of success, and to support it with complete loyalty, so that no shadow of responsibility for its failure, if it were to fail, should fall on him, it often wounded his susceptibilities as a monarch, and he considered its fall a foregone conclusion. We only know this from his letters to Decazes, his other self, to whom he did not scruple to reveal his secret mind. From these we learn that he disliked the doctrinaires, said that Camille Jordan's boasting made him feel ill, and was much irritated at some of Gouvion Saint-Cyr's military arrangements, as trenching on his prerogative, though he saw the sad necessity for the scheme of army reform as a whole. He pointed out, however, that the Duc d'Angoulême was most indignant with the Minister of War, and that if he, who had generally held aloof from the opposition shown to the Ministry by the Royal Family, were to join the ranks of the malcontents, it would be a terrible misfortune. Decazes must insist that the Maréchal shall change certain measures.

"If not, I shall have to tell him. I shall certainly do it politely. But I do not promise that the tone of my voice will not show my real feelings a little."²

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 217.

² *Ibid.*, p. 321.

The King was also very susceptible about the honour of his ancestors, and, unless prevented by Decazes, would certainly have put his veto on the nomination of Monsieur Lemontey to the Académie Française, because in one of his books he had spoken of Louis XIV in an unbecoming manner. The long letter Louis XVIII wrote to Decazes on the subject, is a striking proof of his erudition and remarkable memory, for he is able to state with clearness the rôles played severally by the Sorbonne and the Parliament in the matter of the introduction of inoculation for smallpox, and seems to be equally well versed in minute details about the biography of l'Abbé Morellet. He was still undergoing harassing scenes with the rest of the Royal Family.

The Duchesse d'Angoulême was most anxious to obtain his permission to go to Bordeaux, and he writes to Decazes :

“ Your poor Father goes through much trouble, my dear boy. Yesterday the Duc d'Angoulême asked me to give a definite answer about the journey to Bordeaux. I answered negatively, because of the circumstances and the expense. This morning his wife spoke to me about it. I gave the same answer. She did not hide from me the fact that this caused her much trouble. Then I said to her :

“ ‘ I was perfectly contented with your husband's behaviour during his journey. Can you promise me that yours will be the same as his ? ’ ”

“ A very expressive silence was at first her only answer. Then she added :

“ ‘ I hope that the King will never have cause to complain of my conduct, or of any want of affection for him. ’ ”

“‘Oh,’ I said, ‘I am quite sure of your friendship for me,—as sure as of my own for you. But I consider that this journey will do more harm than good. Besides, the reasons I have already given hold good.’

“The interview, which had lasted three minutes in all, for it was just before luncheon, then came to an end. I consider that I did not answer badly. But the tears that I saw flowing are a weight on my heart.”¹

Spending his life, except when carried behind four galloping horses for his daily drive through the streets of Paris, in an armchair behind the writing-table of white wood he had brought from Hartwell; on bad terms with his family, helpless, and in almost continual pain, the King’s outlook was not cheerful. Nevertheless, it was still possible for him to jest, even on the subject of his infirmities. So he tells Decazes :

“My walk to-day from my dressing-room was extremely weakly, so that I gave up my intention of receiving the Ambassadors standing, not wishing ‘to show the nations Mithridates destroyed,’ so I told every one this. But when I had lunched I felt rather more strength. I made a little trial, and this succeeded, which encouraged me. After Mass, I had myself rolled to the door of the throne-room. There I got up and walked to my armchair, where I waited for the gentlemen; and when they had finished their salutes, which I did not wish to receive standing, as that would have been too tiring, I got on to my legs again, and made the tour of Europe; then I bowed, and went to get again into my chair, where it was waiting for me.

“I do more than this every day. But the essential thing is not to appear too ridiculous, and I flatter myself that I was not that. To-morrow, unless the

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 325.

unforeseen occurs, I shall go to the Council on foot. His Excellence the Minister of the Interior [Decazes] will perhaps feel angry that I did not receive him and his colleagues in the same way. But my son will remember that except those to whom no man is a hero, no one has seen me standing more often than he has."¹

The King was most anxious to act as sponsor to Decazes' infant, but this would not be etiquette unless the Duchesse d'Angoulême would consent to be god-mother; and he approached the Duc d'Angoulême cautiously on the subject. His niece, he knew, would not refuse if he were to ask her; but he wished to be sure that she would be pleasant, and would not, as he expressed the matter to Decazes, be as stiff as a poker at the christening. The Duc d'Angoulême, who was evidently rather in awe of his wife, asked for a few days to find out her sentiments; and returned with the unsatisfactory news that the Duchesse d'Angoulême had only said "that she was always under the King's orders." Therefore, discouraged by this ungenial attitude, Louis XVIII gave up the idea of sponsorship to his friend's child.

He was always most kind to Madame Decazes, sent her a little bouquet every day, took a fatherly interest in her health, and invited her to the Tuileries from time to time. She says:

"The first time, I was taken by my husband. Afterwards I went alone. The King was always most kind. But his kindness did not diminish my embarrassment. Entering his study I made a deep curtsey. The footman who had opened the door followed me, and turned the armchair, in which the

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 326.

King was sitting in front of his little white-wood table. He placed an armchair for me near to this table and to the King's armchair. Then, after having made a second curtsey, I came near, and His Majesty kissed me. Next began the questions; the King called Monsieur Decazes his son, and me his daughter. He asked me whether I was pleased with his son."

Madame Decazes gives another interesting picture of Louis XVIII :

"When I saw the King for the first time he could still walk, but badly and leaning on a stick, though this did not detract from his dignity. When on Monday evening he went into the throne-room, and stopped on the threshold to bow to us, he did it with a nobility, a dignity which made one forget his infirmities. His face must have been handsome. It had become too heavy and too red. But in his very penetrating gaze was much keenness and even irony, which did not prevent his gaze from being kindly."¹

Another side to the King's character is shown us by an incident which took place about this time. The Duc de Berry, a man who had not married till he was nearly forty, as the King exclaimed indignantly, went to a ball given by a ballet dancer with whom he had been intimate before his marriage, and the King expressed his anger "with violence." Calm, suave, self-controlled as he generally was, there were times when he gave way to terrible anger, so that every one trembled before him; and as he says himself when speaking of one of these rare fits of passion, "They must have heard my voice on the Place Carrousel!"

The ultra-Royalists soon declared war on the new

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 341.

Cabinet by bringing forward a law known from the name of the mover as the "loi Barthélemy," designed to modify the organisation of the Electoral Colleges by which the Deputies were chosen. This motion caused the utmost indignation throughout France, as, though the electoral laws were far from perfect, they were looked upon by the majority of the country as a pledge of liberal rights, and any modification of their provisions proposed by the ultra-Royalists, was regarded, and indeed on this occasion rightly, as an attempt to infringe on the Constitution. Molé was again intriguing, to the King's intense indignation.

"Molé's rascality fills me with horror," he writes to Decazes. The ultras were full of joy, especially when the Budget, as well as the Ministerial law on finance framed by the able financier Baron Louis, were not passed by the Chambers. A strong majority of ultras were to be found in the "Chamber of Peers"; but in rejecting the proposed taxation this Chamber was certainly exceeding its powers. There was the utmost excitement throughout the country at these manœuvres, and Louis XVIII spoke with no uncertain voice in the Council Chamber :

"I will crush the majority. This has not to do with you, gentlemen ; it has to do with me. I shall not abandon you, any more than you will abandon me. It is necessary either to crush this fictitious majority, or to crush the real majority which the country sent me in return to my appeal of September 5th. My choice cannot be doubtful."

This was true ; for the Chamber of Deputies, the members of which were chosen by the country, Ministry, and King, was being defied by the Chamber of Peers ; and each peer had been elected

by Louis XVIII himself. To one of his temper the position was unbearable, and when the Ministers, for once forgetting their dissensions and uniting against a common danger, begged the King to break the power of the ultras in the Upper Chamber by appointing sixty new peers of moderate or liberal politics, he assented to this step. Some of this "batch of peers," as they were called in derision, were chosen among men who had been deprived of the peerage conferred on them at the time of the First Restoration, because they had allowed themselves to be reinvested with it by Napoleon during the Hundred Days, others were Marshals and Generals of the Empire, or liberal statesmen. This creation raised a fury of indignation among the ultra-Royalists. Monsieur said to the Duc d'Angoulême :

"This is the beginning of the burial of our family," and the Duchesse d'Angoulême wept in the presence of her husband, a weakness she seldom permitted herself.

The King was a little alarmed at his own audacity ; especially when he found that the representatives of the foreign Powers, influenced by the wave of reaction now sweeping over Europe, considered the creation of these new peers a dangerous measure.

The ultra-liberals were the next people to trouble the much-harassed Cabinet, for they sent up a petition to the King begging him to pardon all the regicides who had been banished from the country ; and when de Serre, one of the Ministers, imprudently announced that the regicides would never be restored to their country, he made enemies of the "Left," or liberals, and thus isolated the unfortunate Ministry completely. Meanwhile the division in the Cabinet became ever

wider, for Dessoles, Gouvion Saint-Cyr, and the Baron Louis inclined more and more to the Left. This disposition to break up into small parties certainly rendered constitutional government difficult, and the King thought with envy of the doings of the British Parliament. "It is not thus," he writes, "that things happen in England. In 1783, the famous Coalition was formed between Lord North and Mr. Fox; it was a case of fire and water. Well! they took up the same system, and were united even after leaving the Ministry. In 1806, at the death of Pitt, follows the Ministry of All the Talents; the same result. Lord Granville and Lord Grey are to-day as united as they were then. When the King changes his Ministry, he does not tell two people, but one, to form another."¹

Worse was to follow; for one of the deputies chosen in the yearly election of the fifth of the Chamber was l'Abbé Grégoire, who was credited with having voted for Louis XVI's death, and who had announced in the Convention that "Kings were morally what monsters were physically." Grégoire was not allowed to take his seat in the Chamber; but his election was hailed with delight not only by the Revolutionaries but also by the ultra-Royalists, who were as willing now as they had been during their exile to join with the liberals against the moderates; their one object being to wreck the Ministry and to ruin Decazes. Grégoire's election was certainly a warning to the Government, and the Comte d'Artois had more right on his side than usual when, the exigencies of the situation causing him to break the obstinate silence on politics by which

¹ Louis XVIII to Decazes. Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 374.

he had for long shown his intense disapproval of all the King's doings, he said solemnly :

“ Brother, you see where you are being led.”

“ Yes, brother,” answered the King ; “ I will see to it.”

This remark was taken to mean that the King intended to change his policy. But though troubled and worried he was impenitent ; and, as he expressed the matter with much truth in a letter to Decazes on Grégoire's election, “ It is Messieurs the ultras whom we may thank for this.”¹

Decazes, too, realised that something must at once be done to stem the Revolutionary tide, and instead of resigning, which, though his wisest course, was doubtless opposed by the King, he determined to take down the colours so long nailed to his mast, and himself to bring forward an alteration in the law of elections, which should substitute a complete change in the Chamber of Deputies every seven years, for a partial renewal each year. This law was to form part of a great scheme of constitutional reform ; and for the carrying out of this he required the assistance of the Royalists, which he could not obtain without Richelieu's help. However, Richelieu refused to have anything to do with politics, and Dessoles, Gouvion Saint-Cyr, and the Baron Louis retired, saying that they would have no hand in any alteration of the election laws. A new Cabinet was formed, in which Decazes still kept his post as Minister of the Interior, and also became President of the Council.

The astute old King had misgivings about the situation, and certainly Decazes had put himself in an awkward position, in his attempt to conciliate the

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 366.

ultra-Royalists by a proposed change in the election laws. Louis XVIII writes to him on the subject of his new dignities :

“The King has read the *Moniteur*. Your good Father signed the ordinance trembling. You know the esteem of one, the tenderness of the other, the confidence of both.”¹

The situation was terribly difficult ; and, to add to its complications, the foreign Ambassadors announced that they considered any alteration in the law of the elections an attack on the Charter, and the ultras refused to be propitiated or to help the Ministry, and pursued Decazes with malicious hatred. They even accused his policy of causing the Revolution which had just broken out in Spain ; while the liberals were alienated by his proposed law to alter the elections, and by his evident desire to become reconciled to the ultras.

Before, however, the date of the momentous discussion on the election laws had been fixed, a terrible catastrophe took place—a catastrophe which ruined Decazes, and completely and permanently changed the political situation.

On February 13th, 1820, near the end of the Carnival, when all Paris was in a state of gaiety, a gala performance took place at the Opera ; and at this the Duc and Duchesse de Berry were present. The Duchesse, who was not very well, wished to retire early, and left before the end of the ballet. The Duc de Berry conducted her to the carriage. As he was returning to the Opera House, a man pushed his way between a soldier and one of the attendants, seized the Prince by the shoulder, thrust a poignard up to the hilt in his

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 376.

right breast, and fled, leaving the weapon in the wound. At first the Duc de Berry did not realise what had happened, but in a minute he staggered and cried :

“I am assassinated ! I have the poignard !”

The Duchesse de Berry rushed out of the carriage and threw herself on her husband. He was carried to the drawing-room attached to the Royal box, whence the sounds of the music of the Opera could be heard ; and when it was discovered that he was so badly wounded that it would be impossible to move him to the Elysée Palace, he was taken to the large hall in the Opera House. Meanwhile the assassin had been caught. His name was Louvel ; he was a saddler’s assistant ; and, when questioned, he stated that he wished to deliver his country from the yoke of the Bourbons, all of whom he intended to assassinate in turn. At his trial it was proved that he had no accomplices, and no evidence could be found of any widespread plot ; the murder was evidently the isolated act of a madman.

Monsieur, Madame, and the Duc d’Angoulême arrived at the Opera House with all possible speed, also the Duc d’Orléans, in whose eyes Chateaubriand, possibly regarding him through spectacles darkened with ultra prejudices, discerned “a badly disguised jubilant expression” ; and the hall was, in addition, thronged with Ministers, grand dignitaries, and eminent personages of the Court. The Duc de Berry was not to be allowed a peaceful death.

Decazes was thunderstruck by the news, of which he at once perceived the real import.

“We are all assassinated !”¹ he cried. He was sent by Monsieur to inform the King of the catastrophe,

¹ *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, vol. iv. p. 155.



From an engraving by Blanchard, after a drawing by Desenne.

THE DEATH OF THE DUC DE BERRY.

but was enjoined to try to prevent him from coming, as his presence would mean an introduction of "the constraint of etiquette"; which the poor father was anxious to avoid. When Decazes arrived at the Tuileries, he found the King, who had already heard the news, in bed, very much agitated, and in a state of high fever. Nevertheless, it was with the utmost difficulty that Decazes persuaded him to remain where he was, promising that he should certainly be at once informed if the Duc de Berry's state were to become desperate. A little later, Decazes was sent by Monsieur to inform the King that the end was very near.

The scene when Louis XVIII arrived was heart-rending. The Duchesse de Berry, who was almost beside herself with grief, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to allow her to return with her baby daughter to Sicily. Indeed, during this tragic night she expressed her despair with so much violence, that her husband implored her to take care of herself for the sake of the child she was bearing; and thus revealed the fact that there was still hope of a continuance of the direct Bourbon line. The Duc de Berry appeared to revive slightly at the entrance of the King, and implored him to pardon "the man," as he termed his assassin. But the King would promise nothing :

"You will live," he said; "and we will talk again about it. The thing is important; it requires much deliberation."¹

The King's grief was extreme. Great tears rolled down his cheeks. Nevertheless, he did not, even at this juncture, forget the exigencies of etiquette; and

¹ Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. viii. p. 28.

when one of the doctors told him that all was over, and asked whether his Majesty would show the Prince "the last respects," Louis XVIII corrected him. "The last attentions," he said, using the prescribed formula; and he went to the bedside and closed his dead nephew's eyes.¹

The King was accompanied by Decazes back to the Tuileries. No one knows what Louis XVIII said in the first transports of his grief to the man he loved as a son; but later, he spoke with his usual clear-sightedness of the tactics of the ultras.

"They will take advantage of my sorrow," he said. "It is not your system they will attack, my dear son, it is mine. They are not angry only with you, but with me"; and when Decazes suggested his own resignation as the only means of calming matters, the King cried:

"I order you to remain in the Ministry! They shall not separate us!"²

The King announced, however, that the measures taken against the Revolutionaries must be "draconian"; and at a Council held by Decazes at 8 o'clock in the morning—two hours after the death of the Duc de Berry—it was decided, partly no doubt in the hope of disarming ultra-Royalist fury, that the Chambers should be asked to pass a temporary enactment suspending personal liberty, and another subjecting the press to severe supervision. Later in the day the Chamber of Deputies met, and an ultra, Clausel de Coussergues, caused a sensation by proposing to bring an act of accusation against "Monsieur Decazes, Minister of the Interior, as accomplice to the murder of

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 398.

² Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 407.

Monseigneur the Duc de Berry.”¹ Cries of “order” rose from most of the benches, and when the orator returned to his seat he was received with coldness even by his friends ; but many outside the Chamber agreed with him.

Monsieur de Barante says, in a letter to a friend : “ Nothing will give you any idea of the state of excitement and ferocity reached by the ultras outside the Chambers ; they talk of nothing but massacres, assassinations, and vengeance ; for a time it seemed likely that civil war might begin in the streets of Paris. Their war-cry is that Decazes was the Duc de Berry’s assassin, and from this nonsense they obtain the alarming effect they wish for. They excite themselves by this announcement, they believe it after having said it ; it is the one cry of the women, it is a reality for the soldiers of the Bodyguard.”²

Decazes’ life seems really to have been in danger ; but the King was still firm, though terribly agitated. At the Royal Council held the next day, he said :

“ The Royalists deal me the most deadly blow ; they know that Monsieur Decazes’ system is also mine, and they accuse him of having assassinated my nephew. It is not the first time they have calumniated me. I intend to save the country without the ultras if possible.”

However, a deadly combination was forming against Decazes, headed by Vitrolles, who was intensely jealous of him, and advised Monsieur to proceed to extreme measures, and to leave the Tuileries unless the insolent favourite were turned out. He evidently incited Monsieur also to the performance of the next scene in the drama.

¹ Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. viii. p. 285.

² *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 415.

When Decazes went to see the King one day after dinner, he found him terribly agitated ; “ his face of a red purple, his eyes bloodshot ! ”

“ Oh, my God ! ” he cried ; “ what is the matter with the King ? ”¹

Louis XVIII, still trembling with anger, told him that a moment earlier, his brother and his niece had knelt before him, crying that they would not rise till he had promised to dismiss Decazes. The Comte d'Artois had indeed spoken with kindness of the Minister of the Interior, and had said that he would be the first to recall him after three months had elapsed ; but the Duchesse d'Angoulême had made use of the ominous words—“ Sire, we ask it to prevent there being another victim ” ;² and when the King, misunderstanding her words, thought she was alluding to himself, she explained that she was not afraid for him, but for some one dear to him.

During this scene the Duc d'Angoulême stood with his eyes cast down, and refused to heed the imploring glances the King directed towards him, in the hope of inducing him to come to the rescue. This hurt the King terribly, as the Duc d'Angoulême was the one member of his family on whom he depended for sympathetic understanding, so far had he travelled from the days when the “ angel of consolation ” was all in all to him. In a letter to Decazes he says, “ Cæsar was happier than I ; he only once said *tu quoque*. Shakespeare knew well the human heart. Here is the curse of King Lear on his daughter : ‘ That she may feel how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is, To have a thankless child. ’ I do not pronounce this male-

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 424.

² *Ibid.*, p. 425.

diction ; God preserve me from it ; but I feel how cruel it is.”¹

However, the King was slightly consoled, when the Duc d'Angoulême came of his own accord, to explain that he had not been let into the secret of the proposed onslaught, and disapproved of it ; but that his respect for his father had kept him silent.

When Louis XVIII related to Decazes what had passed at this extraordinary scene, he still declared that he would not give in, for that would mean submission to his brother, and virtually abdication. However, it was now impossible for Decazes to remain at the head of affairs, as even the King began to see.

Therefore, the Comte d'Artois, at Decazes' suggestion, managed, by promising Richelieu his whole-hearted support, to overcome his intense objection to re-entering political life, an objection partly caused by his knowledge of the King's precarious health, and of the perpetual intrigues and opposition of the heir-apparent. “Your policy shall be mine,” Monsieur said to Richelieu ; “I will be your head lieutenant.”²

Decazes was to go to England as Ambassador. He received a note from the King, as he was getting into the carriage to start on his journey. It contained the words, “Good-bye, my dear son ; I bless you a thousand times from the depths of a broken heart !”

Louis XVIII was always sentimental, and the courtiers laughed because the passwords at the Tuileries that day were “Élie,” Decazes' christian name, and “Chartres,” the place where he would spend the first night. It is always easy to scoff ; but the King's

¹ Daudet, *Louis XVIII et le Duc Decazes*, p. 433.

² *Ibid.*, p. 435.

misery was very real. "All is over for me,"¹ he said to the Spanish Ambassador.

Decazes had now been made a Duke, and this fact led incidentally to a sad disappointment for the Duc de Castries, who has not otherwise a place in this history. "On the day before Decazes' departure the Duc de Castries received a fine portrait of the King at nine o'clock in the evening. At ten o'clock, the magnificent work of Daniel upon India, most beautifully illustrated, was brought to his house. Both these presents were brought by footmen from the King. Unaccustomed to receive such favours, the Duc returned most effusive thanks, saying he would come himself to express to his Majesty in person his gratitude for this kindness. At midnight a messenger came to his room in a great bustle "from the King." This time he brought a beautiful case, containing the gold medals which had been struck since the Revolution, with ducal crowns in relief upon every face. The Duc de Castries rubbed his eyes, and could not understand the reason for these marks of distinction. After long reflection, he went to sleep again, to dream upon the matter. At three o'clock he was again aroused, but this time a footman came with an infinity of excuses to request the return of the presents. The King's messengers had been misled by the title "Duc," which Monsieur Decazes had only received the previous evening, and had brought Monsieur de Castries the objects which his Majesty had intended for the favourite. The Duc de Castries remained the poorer by the louis which he had distributed to the bearers of these transitory splendours."²

¹ Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. viii. p. 332.

² Trans. *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, vol. iii. p. 29.

CHAPTER XVII

Ultra-Royalist intrigue to influence the King through Madame du Cayla—La Rochefoucauld's share in it—The King's growing affection for Madame du Cayla—The Session of 1820—Violent dissensions—The birth of the Duc de Bordeaux—Tumults in the Chamber—Royalist triumph at the elections—Disturbances throughout Europe—Duplicity of the Duchesse de Berry—Decazes visits Paris—King's growing infirmities—His drowsiness and indifference—Napoleon's death—Monsieur harries the Ministry—The extreme Right and extreme Left unite to wreck the Cabinet—Richelieu's indignation with Monsieur—His resignation and death—Madame du Cayla's share in forming new Cabinet—King's virtual abdication to Monsieur.

IT is now time to speak of an extraordinary intrigue which was beginning to weave itself round the old monarch, and which had the effect of virtually causing him to abdicate in favour of Monsieur; so that, as an acute and well-informed observer remarks,¹ after December 1821 it was Charles X, not Louis XVIII, who in reality held the reins of government. In February 1820, when the Duc de Richelieu became President of the Council, the plot had only lately begun to run its underground course, and the existence of a new favourite, introduced by ultra-Royalist agency to the King, was kept a profound secret.

This favourite was a woman named Madame du Cayla; the daughter of Talon, who had been Head of the Police before the Revolution. It was therefore said that she first ingratiated herself with

¹ Pasquier, *Mémoires*, vol. vi. p. 11.

Louis XVIII by giving into his possession papers which might have incriminated him in "l'Affaire Favras." There is, however, no proof of this; and the ostensible reason for her first interview with Louis XVIII, which took place in 1819, was to beg for Royal protection for her children, who had been deprived, by their grandfather's will, of the property which should rightfully have come to them. Madame du Cayla was a charming woman, who had a merry laugh and much natural gaiety; besides being clever, tactful, and discreet. She was, indeed, so discreet, so attentive to her mother-in-law, with whom she lived, and who adored her, so careful also to surround herself with a circle of highly respectable elderly people, that in spite of the fact that she was separated from the Comte du Cayla, and that her past had not been altogether immaculate, she was looked upon in society as a young woman of devout habits, and almost prudish virtue.

Madame du Cayla was first introduced to Louis XVIII by her mother-in-law, who had been lady-in-waiting to the Comtesse de Provence; and the King received the fair suppliant with the utmost kindness, and expressed a wish to see her again. It was after this first interview, that "a sort of instinctive prevision, of interior light on the subject of her future destiny," came to Madame du Cayla's devoted friend Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld. He was an ultra of the deepest dye, and he and Madame du Cayla had known each other for a long time, and had exchanged letters breathing the most ardent affection; though the gentleman is careful to assure us that the feeling on both sides was purely platonic. In La Rochefoucauld's opinion, as in that of the ultras generally, Louis XVIII was being deceived and alienated from his family by Decazes, who was

hurrying France to ruin and revolution; and, as La Rochefoucauld puts it: "It seemed to me that Madame du Cayla was the only person who could succeed in dissipating the illusions with which Louis XVIII was surrounded; and which it was necessary to destroy for his honour, his happiness, and for that of his family and of France."¹

La Rochefoucauld was a man of considerable energy, and according to his own account was absolutely patriotic and altruistic, though, judging from subsequent events, and from the letters he so obligingly and naïvely publishes, we cannot avoid a suspicion that a thought may occasionally have crossed his mind, to the effect that the position of dearest friend to the King's dearest friend might not be without advantages. We are almost ashamed, however, at even hinting this, so lofty are Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld's sentiments, and so beautiful was the prayer with which he despatched Madame du Cayla on her noble mission, which, from his account, she undertook with considerable reluctance.

To persuade Madame du Cayla to act the part of Esther to Ahasuerus or of Madame de Maintenon to Louis XIV, was the easiest part of the business. She had also to be equipped for her rôle; and this implied considerable labour, as the King, though in a most precarious state of health and subject to fits of exhaustion and drowsiness, was still well informed and witty; and the task of amusing, and then thoroughly entralling him, required considerable knowledge, as well as charm and talent.

Madame du Cayla had learnt from her mother-in-law many details about events that had passed in

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. vi. p. 247.

Louis XVIII's youth, and these would, it was hoped, amuse the old King; while before the next interview for which La Rochefoucauld insisted that she should apply, he had applied to Madame de Balbi for further information; so that Madame du Cayla departed to her second visit well primed. "The anxiety with which I awaited the result of this interview can well be imagined," says La Rochefoucauld. "Every detail was precious! It was important to know each word that had passed."

On her return, Madame du Cayla's report was satisfactory. "Madame," the King had said to her, "I had a tender affection for your mother-in-law.¹ I knew how to appreciate her, and I became acquainted with you through her; her recommendation will be sacred to me. Shortly before her death she described your situation and misfortunes to me, and she has inspired me with so real an interest in you, that you may without fear claim the proofs of it whenever you may find them useful."²

This speech was most satisfactory, and the only puzzling thing to Madame du Cayla was a remark which the King made, when she spoke pathetically of her cruel husband's threat to tear her children from her; and, thinking of Decazes, he said, "And they wish to take *my* child away from me, too, Madame!"³ He little thought that the amiable and charming lady before him, who, he remarks, "never spoke ill of any one," was Decazes' most bitter opponent.

The Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld now felt encouraged to put forth all his powers in the great work of saving France; and he became so indefatigable, that

¹ The elder Madame du Cayla had died shortly before this.

² *Mémoires de La Rochefoucauld*, vol. vi. p. 248.

³ *Vitrolles Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 496.

we are not surprised at the constant references to fatigue which appear in his letters. Between coaching Madame du Cayla in her duties, listening to her reports of what was said during her interviews with the King, talking to clever people to gain information which might be passed on to Louis XVIII as though from her, and appearing to join in all frivolous amusements, so that no one might suspect what was really his great preoccupation, poor Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld led a busy and a harassed life. However, his efforts were crowned with success, for Madame du Cayla's occasional visits to Louis XVIII became gradually more frequent, and were at last fixed as weekly; and Louis XVIII might never be disturbed on Wednesday afternoons, which were devoted to her agreeable society.

Letters, too, were exchanged daily; letters which the King imagined to be confidential; but which were on Madame du Cayla's side the work of La Rochefoucauld; and a hard task he found the labour of composition. "It required an enormous amount of attention, memory, research, and work," he says plaintively, "to discuss in this correspondence literature, history, politics, morals, and even religion, with the best informed and most witty man in his kingdom."¹

Sometimes, too, difficulties arose between La Rochefoucauld and Madame du Cayla, for once firmly established with the King, she unfortunately showed a reprehensible desire for independence, and was ungratefully and foolishly inclined to go her own way, without consulting the faithful friend to whom as he reproachfully reminded her, she owed everything.

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. vi. p. 252.

The influence Madame du Cayla assumed over the King was of gradual growth. As long as Decazes remained in power, she was in all probability only a casual visitor, and one whose influence did not much alarm him. The King was most anxious that his two friends should meet, as he considered that the Minister of the Interior might be useful to Madame du Cayla in a lawsuit she was about to bring against her husband, but she refused to have any dealings with iniquity. Louis XVIII is reported to have said, "Can you refuse to receive one whom the King, so full of tenderness and of goodness to you, honours with his affection? Give in at least on a single point, and meet him in my presence." But Madame du Cayla was firm. Her work was to be the great one of saving the State from the machinations of Decazes, and she refused to become acquainted with him.

The secret was most cleverly kept, and after Decazes' fall, when Richelieu had become First Minister, he only discovered Madame du Cayla's existence by chance; and when it was suggested that he should use her as a political instrument, he refused, with his usual high-mindedness, to sully his fingers by dealings with an intriguer. The scope of Madame du Cayla's work, which was certainly executed with great ability, was detailed for her most minutely in La Rochefoucauld's letters. She was to destroy, if possible, the King's affectionate remembrance of Decazes, to reconcile Louis XVIII with Monsieur and the rest of the Royal Family, and to place him in the hands of the ultra-Royalists. If she could prevent the King from corresponding with Decazes she was to do so; but if this could not be compassed, she was to try to see the fallen Minister's letters. "You

will confess to the King that you are very curious to see the letters Monsieur Decazes writes to him, if he *does* still write to him," are La Rochefoucauld's directions.¹

It must be allowed to Monsieur's credit, that he does not appear to have been at first privy to the plot woven round his helpless and invalided brother, though when he *did* know a certain aspect of it, which was no doubt presented to him in a picturesquely disposed light, he did not apparently scruple to reap the advantages of it. "The King is behaving perfectly to him, and the poor Prince is enchanted,"² says La Rochefoucauld; and, "Another proof that Monsieur appreciates what we are doing is that he said to me, 'The King is delightful to-day, because the influence near him is perfect; if it were not so, I know well what would happen.'"³

It is time now to turn to the political situation, on which the intrigue we have been considering exercised a strong influence. The Session of 1820, when Richelieu assumed the reins of government, was so stormy that it almost resembled civil war. Richelieu had come into power determined before all things to combat every revolutionary tendency, and with this object in view, after bringing forward amidst much excitement and opposition, an enactment modifying the much-vexed law of elections, and then depriving the doctrinaires, Camille Jordan, Royer-Collard, Guizot, and Barante, of their positions in the Council of State, he obtained after many parleyings the consent of Villèle and Corbière, members of the ultra party, to form part of the Ministry.

¹ *Mémoires*, vol. viii. p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

Villèle, though belonging nominally to the extreme party and much coerced by them, was of a calm disposition, could be depended upon to take a reasonable view of the different subjects under discussion, and was in the future to rule France, nominally as Louis XVIII's First Minister, but in reality as the politician who represented Monsieur's views. Corbière was more violent and difficult to work with ; but though Richelieu, as First Minister, and Pasquier, as Foreign Minister, received these gentlemen most loyally, and did their best to initiate them thoroughly into the former work of the Cabinet, the new recruits would never allow themselves to be amalgamated with it, but kept to their position as heads of a party ; and showed plainly that they were only birds of passage among their present surroundings, and were waiting for the not distant time when the ultras would come into full power.

Revolutions were in the air. Spain and Naples were rising against their legitimate sovereigns, insurrections took place in Paris, it was necessary to call out the military, and secret societies were rife. Most serious symptom of all, on August 19th, 1820, a military conspiracy took place, to which Lafayette was privy. It was discovered in time, but it aroused a sense of insecurity throughout the nation. The situation in France was most difficult, and the exaggerations and unreasonable doings of the ultras, who saw republican conspiracies and uprisings where they did not exist, would certainly not steer the bark safely through the stormy waters ; for that, moderation and prudence were necessary.

Fortunately, Louis XVIII, with the impartiality and cool-headedness characteristic of him, accorded the

new Ministry a loyal and whole-hearted support, which it certainly required, as it was violently attacked by the extremists of both parties ; and its policy of keeping nominally to the Centre but sending out feelers to the Right, while sternly repressing the Left, seemed likely to be no more successful than Decazes' plan of moderation, with excursions to the Left.

The ceremony of the opening of the Chamber took place this year in the Louvre, as the King's infirmities and increasing weakness made it impossible for him to be carried to the Chamber of Deputies. "This Monarch, crushed by years and infirmities, while his heart and intelligence were intact, was a touching sight, as he came, before quitting life, to beg from his subjects a little calm and repose after the cruel trials he had experienced."¹

A great joy, however, came to Louis XVIII at this time ; for on September 29th, 1820, the Duchesse de Berry brought into the world a little boy, who was given the title of the Duc de Bordeaux. All the Royal Family hurried to the Duchesse's bedside, Louis XVIII being the last to arrive. Ancient customs were strictly observed ; and after kissing his niece, and presenting her with a diamond ornament in the form of a flower, the baby was brought to him, and, imitating what had been done at the birth of Henry of Navarre, he rubbed the infant's lips with a pod of garlic, and poured a few drops of Jurançon wine down its throat. The Ministers were admitted to the anteroom to see the newly born infant, and Pasquier says : "It is difficult to imagine all the touching emotion that can be produced by a moment of happiness, after many troubles and sorrowful ordeals,

¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. v. p. 68.

on a face generally cold, sad, and even severe ; unless one has seen Madame d'Angoulême holding the Royal child on her knees, showing it to every one, and seeming to say, ' You see this ? The cup of adversity is at last finished ; after this striking favour we have the right to count on Divine justice.' ”¹

France, with but few exceptions, rejoiced with the young widow ; but the delight of the ultra-Royalists was almost delirious in its expression, their newspapers calling the baby “ the child of miracle,” and one of them blasphemously likening the Duchesse de Berry to the Virgin Mary.

However, a few clear-sighted supporters of the Monarchy in France, who considered that its only chance of permanency was to be found in the extinction of the elder Bourbon branch and the passing of the crown to the Orleans family, looked on the baby's arrival as ominous. Madame de Boigne was walking with Pozzo di Borgo in the Tuileries gardens, when they heard in the distance the sound of the *Te Deum*, which was being sung to celebrate the birth. “ Listen ! There is the death-knell of a dynasty ! ”² said Pozzo.

Meanwhile, the Assembly in the Chambers battled about the law establishing the censure, and the law temporarily abrogating personal liberty. There were terrible tumults ; extreme orators on either side made violent speeches, which were in reality addressed to the country at large ; and the Ministry tried most unsuccessfully to avoid bringing forward measures which would arouse acrimonious debate. In the voting for the renewal of a fifth number of the De-

¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. iv. p. 464.

² *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. ii. p. 467.

puties, which had been the measure at last decided on, the Royalists were largely in the ascendant; and even returned some of the members of the *Chambre In-trouvable* of 1815. A moderate Royalist majority would indeed have been satisfactory to the Ministry; but this triumph was alarming, as it made the exigencies of the ultras more extravagant than ever. Louis XVIII expressed the matter neatly when he said to his Ministers, "So we are in the situation of the unfortunate rider who had not sufficient elasticity to mount his horse. He prayed St. George with so much fervour that St. George gave him more than was necessary, so that he jumped over the other side."¹

A wave of revolution was sweeping over Europe, combated on the part of most of the crowned heads, led by Austria under the leadership of Metternich, by a return to absolute methods of government. At Troppau a Congress of Great Powers met on November 1st, 1820, with the object of debating on the revolutions which were disturbing Naples and Spain; and the three most absolute Powers, Russia—so had Alexander I fallen away from his early views—Austria, and Prussia, summoned the King of Naples to meet them at Laybach to discuss the situation. France and England at first held aloof from these proceedings; but eventually Louis XVIII wrote to the King of Naples advising him to be present at the Congress of the Powers. Before this Congress had begun, European affairs were further complicated by the rising of Greece against Turkey.

In France, the reports of conspiracies continued, and petards and crackers—generally discovered to be harm-

¹ See Crousaz-Crétet's *Life of the Duc de Richelieu*, p. 383.

less—were found in different places. The ultra-Royalists were, of course, terribly excited at each new discovery; but the King was not much alarmed at these incidents, and even suspected ultra-Royalist plots. When in consequence of one of these excitements the Duchesse de Berry sent to ask after him, he returned a joking message which showed his suspicions: "Tell my niece that I did not throw the bomb myself," he said.

Matters, however, seemed serious when petards were discovered in the Treasury, and when the Duchesse de Berry brought Monsieur a paper which she had, she said, found on her toilette table, announcing a formidable plot against the Royal Family; and for three days the most searching inquisition took place to discover the instigators of the conspiracy. It must therefore have been a most painful position for the King, when, at an extraordinary meeting of the Council convoked by him, he was obliged to announce that, fearing discovery, the Duchesse de Berry had told her confessor that the threatening letter had been written at her dictation; though she announced that it only anticipated the undoubted intentions of the assassins. The Council listened with downcast eyes to this disclosure, and the King spoke in a low voice, and finished with the words: "Gentlemen, I will ask you to spare the reputation of my niece as far as possible, although she deserves no consideration."¹

In order to hush up the matter as far as was practicable, inquiries were continued for a short time; and when they dropped, Monsieur's headquarters, the Pavillon Marsan, were loud in their complaints of the culpable negligence of the police, and declared

¹ *De Boigne Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 32.

that the Duchesse de Berry was surrounded by assassins.

They were even more disturbed by the news that, owing to his wife's illness, Decazes was leaving London, and was for a time coming to Paris.

There was, however, no real fear that he would regain his influence over the King, for Madame du Cayla had accomplished her task cleverly ; and even if no counter-influence had been at work, Louis XVIII was always loyal to his Cabinet, and, as he had shown in the case of Blacas, would allow no interference in politics except that of an authorised Minister. He wrote now to Decazes telling him that the ultra-liberals were as dangerous to him as the ultra-Royalists, and expressing his opinion that a week in Paris would give Madame Decazes sufficient rest, before she continued her journey to the South. When Villèle and Corbière came to express to him their fears about Decazes' visit, he announced that once a man was out of the Government he would not be allowed with impunity to hazard a word to him about it, and that if Decazes were to attempt this, "he would send him away at once, and never see him again in his life."¹

Louis XVIII kept his word ; and, Decazes being unexpectedly detained in Paris by his wife's dangerous illness, he refused to see him after his first visit, till he should come to say good-bye. He tried to soften the blow by writing his friend an affectionate letter, in which he said : "You know only too well how, in a Government like ours, it is impossible to reckon without the majority. The present Ministry have it by the joining of the Centre and the Right ; but the injustice of this Right towards you has not

¹ *Villèle Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 438.

diminished, and I am sadly certain that if your stay here were to be prolonged, the majority would plunge us into chaos!"¹

Credit must be accorded to the King for his firmness on this occasion, as, in spite of Madame du Cayla's ascendancy, he still cast wistful glances towards "his son" Decazes, as we shall see later. His infirmities were, however, becoming aggravated, so that he was more and more dependent on those around him, and increasingly anxious for peace and quiet.

Pasquier, the Foreign Minister, speaking of the proposed European Congress on Eastern Affairs, says: "People may be astonished that in anything having to do with so critical a matter we have not spoken of the personal feelings of the King of France, nor of the part taken by him in so important a deliberation, and one in which his long experience and the general intelligence of his mind would naturally give him so much authority; but it must be allowed that the King, to whose infirmities much was added by the weight of years, had begun to fall into the state of apathy which characterised the three last years of his life, and put him at the mercy of the people who perseveringly applied themselves to the task of dominating him. From the day when Monsieur Decazes had been taken from him by proceedings which had wounded his heart, his self-esteem, and his regard for his Royal dignity, he had only occupied himself with business so that it should not be said that he had given it up. He often remarked that a King who abdicated always ends by repenting it; that he should be spared great shocks, and the necessity for taking any great resolution, was all

¹ See Crousaz-Crétet's *Life of the Duc de Richelieu*, p. 426.

the King asked from those to whom authority was entrusted.

As to the contradictions which it was not always possible to spare him, as long as they did not clash with a small number of fixed ideas which habit had rendered dear to him, he was willing not to appear to notice them.”¹

Louis XVIII was destined, at any rate, to outlive his great rival, for news reached the King about this time, that the Emperor Napoleon had died at Saint-Helena on May 5th, 1821. This intelligence, which would have caused a revolution ten years earlier, now made little sensation in France; but some of Napoleon's old soldiers felt his death keenly. Louis XVIII knew how to be generous, and he sent for Rapp, the General on duty at Saint-Cloud, who had retired in the deepest grief when the news reached him, and said, “Rapp, I know that you are profoundly afflicted by the news I have received. This sorrow does honour to your heart; I feel only the more affection and esteem for you.” “Sire,” answered Rapp, “I owe everything to Napoleon; even the esteem and goodness of your Majesty and of your august family.”²

Meanwhile, Monsieur had completely forgotten his promise to support the Ministry, and was privy to every plot designed to harry and hamper it. Matters were now approaching a crisis, for Villèle and Corbière were extremely discontented with their position in the Cabinet, and Corbière excited Richelieu's indignation by wishing to get rid of officials who were doing their duty satisfactorily, in order to substitute ultras for them. “Something *must* be done for the Royalists,”³

¹ *Pasquier Mémoires*, vol. v. p. 344.

² *Ibid.*, p. 358. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

he said. The two ultras had in fact separated themselves entirely from the Cabinet, and were acting entirely as emissaries from the Royalists. In the end Villèle asked to be made Minister of the Interior, and when Richelieu expressed his surprise at this request, said in a low voice: "I am ashamed to confess it to you, but I *must* have places to give."¹ The venality of the ultras was indeed unblushing, and eventually, to Richelieu's relief, Villèle and Corbière left the Cabinet.

The ultra-Royalists now concentrated their forces on making a grand attack on the Cabinet, and after the Ministers had had several interviews with Monsieur, during which he showed extreme disgust and impatience because they would not at once do something to help the "poor Émigrés," the Right joined with the extreme Left to wreck the Cabinet.

In order to accomplish this, they managed to be elected members of the Commission appointed to prepare the Address to the King at the opening of the Chambers, and inserted in it two passages strongly condemnatory of the Ministerial policy. In one of these they politely hoped that the "precious peace enjoyed by the country had not been obtained by sacrifices incompatible with the honour of the nation and the dignity of your Crown"; and, in the other, they made a covert attack on the patriotic and high-minded Richelieu, and embodying Talleyrand's sneering insinuation that he took his orders from Russia, said, referring to the grain imported from Odessa, that they regretted the agricultural distress, and the insufficiency and tardiness of the precautions against the introduction of corn from abroad.

The King was indignant at these reflections on his

¹ Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. x. p. 237.

Ministry, considering them an attack on the Royal prerogative ; and at first he declared that he would not receive the Address. Later, it was decided that he should receive it but not read it to the President, as was customary, and should return a severe answer.

On September 29th, 1821, the Council assembled in his presence to discuss the terms of the answer, and Louis XVIII, who at first seemed to be dozing, suddenly woke up, and insisted on adopting the most decided line of disapproval proposed. When the President and the two Secretaries came to receive the answer to the Address, the King's manner was severe, his voice firm, and his tone dignified. He stated that the agricultural distress could not be prevented, as all Europe was suffering from it, and went on to say : "In exile and persecution I have supported my rights, the honour of my name, and that of my country. On the throne, surrounded by my people, I feel indignant even at the thought that I could ever sacrifice the honour of the nation and the dignity of my crown. I hope that most of those who have voted for this Address have not weighed all the expressions in it. If they had had time to realise them, they would not have allowed a supposition which as King, I will not characterise, and which as father, I should wish to forget."

So spoke Louis XVIII, with a last flicker of the old spirit, so soon to be extinguished by weakness and by unworthy intrigue ; and the ultra-Royalists were consternated at the failure of their attempt to discredit the Government. Villèle, who had all along disapproved strongly of the Address, characterised it as "monstrous," and the Ministry took courage. However, the breathing-space was short, for the Opposition

not only defeated the Government over a law on the censure of the press, but started fierce personal attacks against the President of the Council. Richelieu, who had hated re-entering political life, was now most anxious to remain at the head of affairs till the country should be pacified; and he appealed to Monsieur, who had induced him to become President of the Council by promising to be his first lieutenant, and who had since then instigated every movement against him, related to him the unworthy manœuvres against the Government put in motion by the ultra-Royalists, and implored him to put a stop to them. At first Monsieur evaded the question in his usual lighthearted manner, by saying that he had no power, and had nothing to do with public affairs.

When, however, Richelieu pressed him sternly, reminding him that he had formerly given his word to support the Ministry if Richelieu would head it, and when he finished with the words, "Monseigneur, it is the word of a Prince given to a gentleman which I claim!" Monsieur was at last cornered. "Ah, my dear Duke, you take things too literally," he said; "and then the circumstances were so difficult!"¹ Richelieu did not answer in words, but he looked the Prince straight in the face; and then, turning his back on him, he left the room, shutting the door behind him with a violence which surprised the gentlemen-in-waiting outside.

Richelieu went straight to his friend Pasquier, who tells the story, and who says that, horrified at his pallor and agitation, he asked what had happened: "'I am overwhelmed,' said the Duke, 'by what I have heard, and I am choking with indignation and can hardly look

¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. v. p. 409.

at you, so ashamed am I of the man whose words I am going to repeat to you.' Then he told me what I have just written."

Monsieur had won; for the only possible course open to Richelieu was to offer the King his resignation and that of the Cabinet.

When the King first heard of the possible fall of the Ministry he was terribly agitated: "Good heavens!" he said, putting his head between his hands, "What will become of me? What do they wish? What conditions will they impose on me?"¹

However, by the time Richelieu went to him, Madame du Cayla had been at work, and Louis XVIII received the resignation of the Cabinet with a promptitude which deeply wounded the Duke. "You cannot take any other course," the King said, "without lowering yourself; the abandonment of even one of your colleagues would be a weakness unworthy of you."²

Meanwhile, Madame du Cayla and Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld were still fully occupied, for the downfall of the Richelieu Cabinet was not of much avail, unless an ultra-Royalist Government could be established in its place. Villèle, with whom the two had had many dealings, must undertake the leadership of the Ministry; and, in his anxiety to have the matter settled, La Rochefoucauld paid him four visits in a day; while Madame du Cayla urged continually on the King the necessity of associating Monsieur with the Government. Even in his weak and failing state, the King made a faint struggle against this, for it went terribly against the grain to abdicate to his brother. The second letter Madame du Cayla received from

¹ *Trans. de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 55.

² *Pasquier Mémoires*, vol. v. p. 410.

him on the fateful morning of Richelieu's resignation, showed that the situation was dangerous, for he was still reluctant to have recourse to Monsieur and the ultra-Royalists; and, according to La Rochefoucauld's triumphant retrospective summary to Madame du Cayla, it was only at the fifth letter which passed during the morning, that "the King, carried away by your eloquence, gave in to your reasoning, and promised you to send for Monsieur and to receive from him the Ministry that you, Madame, had just obtained for France."¹

Louis XVIII, however, though hopelessly enthralled and vanquished, was not yet blind; and hearing from Richelieu of certain intrigues in which Monsieur was engaged, he said with a sigh: "What can you expect? He conspired against Louis XVI, he conspired against me, he will conspire against himself!"²

Possibly the King realised what was likely to be the end of Monsieur's gambols; for one day he amused himself with writing an account of the character of the Duc d'Orléans, and in it are found the remarkable words: "He does not move, and yet I see that he travels!"³

Richelieu was asked to draw up a list of the men he thought suitable for the Cabinet and to submit it to Monsieur, but the latter strongly objected to two or three of the proposed Ministry, notably to Blacas, whom he had always detested. The names were altered as he chose, and Villèle and Corbière were put in charge of the Ministry.

When once the matter was settled, however,

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. vii. p. 41.

² Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. x. p. 391.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. xii. p. 469.



From an engraving by F. Garnier, after a picture by F. Gérard.

COMTE D'ARTOIS.
(Afterwards Charles X.)

Louis XVIII was anxious to be quit of his old Ministry and to be left in peace, and he sent three times during the evening to demand the formal resignation of the Cabinet, the news of which he had promised to Madame du Cayla before bedtime.

We hear no more of Richelieu in political life, for, worn out by the agitations and labours he had undergone, he died only five months later, on May 17th, 1822, at the age of fifty-five.

Till Madame du Cayla had thoroughly accomplished her work of poisoning the King's mind against the fallen Ministry, Louis XVIII invariably received Richelieu with much cordiality, but the rest of the Royal Family always treated him with coldness, sometimes with studied rudeness; and though the Duke affected to smile at their behaviour, it was a smile of sadness, for he was deeply hurt at the ingratitude shown him, and righteously indignant at being ousted by intrigue.

Thus, in December of the year 1821, did Louis XVIII virtually abdicate to his brother; and Charles X inaugurated the policy compounded of weakness and harshness, which was to exile the Bourbons permanently from France.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Villèle Ministry—Infringements of the Charter—Spanish expedition—Chateaubriand—La Rochefoucauld—Madame du Cayla—Louis XVIII presents her with Château at Saint-Ouen—Entertainment there—King's precarious condition—His determined courage—Madame du Cayla persuades him to see a priest—Decazes' grief—Death of Louis XVIII.

CHATEAUBRIAND tells us somewhere—though he evidently wishes us to contradict him mentally as far as one man is concerned—that in passing from Napoleon's heroic era to the times of the Restoration, when he and his compeers came to the front, we seem to be transported from an age of giants to that of pigmies. This is not, I think, the impression of the ordinary reader, to whom there is a sense of relief in leaving despotism—though dominated by the extraordinary figure of Napoleon—for constitutional government, even if it be occasionally weak and erring ; while a tremendous clearing of the moral atmosphere takes place when, in exchange for Talleyrand, the man without feeling, and Fouché, the man without a conscience, we are confronted with Richelieu, whose most bitter enemies were forced to admire his patriotism and highmindedness, and with Decazes, who, though ambitious, was large-minded enough, as we have seen, to work for the benefit of his friend, even when the latter had considered it necessary to try to oust him from political life.

These men were working for their country. But with Richelieu's fall, and the accession to power of Villèle, Corbière, and Chateaubriand ; with the substitution, too, of Monsieur, with his ineradicable notion that to rule was to assume leadership of a party, and to assure at all costs that party's predominance, for the calm, sagacious Louis XVIII, eminently fitted, not only by his clear-sightedness and freedom from prejudice, but by a certain lack of initiative, to be guided by his Ministers, and thus to take the position of constitutional monarch, the atmosphere changes, and intrigue takes the place of politics.

Villèle was indeed an able man, and, as his political opponent Guizot allows, "though he arrived at the Government as a party man, and remained a party man in the Government, he tried to make the spirit of government prevail over the spirit of party among his followers."¹ However, the ultra-Royalists were too strong for him ; besides, his hands were not clean, for he was to a certain extent in league with Madame du Cayla and La Rochefoucauld, who considered that he was beholden to them for his position as head of the Ministry. There is something repellent, too, about Villèle's habit of belittling his colleagues ; and his subserviency to his party gives the impression that he would stoop to anything for the sake of remaining in power.

However, as this is a biography of Louis XVIII and not the history of the Restoration, it will only be necessary to glance very briefly at political events before returning to the room where the King, now in a dying condition, still struggled heroically to perform his official duties, and showed from time to time

¹ *Guizot Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 233.

that though his will was subjugated by his brother, and he was enthralled and partially blinded by the intrigues surrounding him, his brain was still clear, and that he would, if left to himself, have been capable, when his health permitted, of judging affairs with his usual sagacity and moderation.

The Villèle Ministry inaugurated its reign by several infringements of the Charter. At La Rochefoucauld's suggestion, a law was passed by which no newspaper could be started without authorisation from the Government, a measure which made the Press a tool of the State. The censorship was abolished, but any misdemeanours committed by the Press were to be judged, not by a jury, but by the Royal Courts. The education of youth was put altogether into the hands of the clergy, and Monsieur Frayssinous, Bishop of Hermopolis, was made Grand Master of the University.

Many were the risings throughout the country, and summary were the proceedings taken against them. In one fortnight nine men were executed for political offences, and three others only a month later, while numberless lawsuits were brought against newspapers with liberal tendencies.

In Spain, Louis XVIII's kinsman, Ferdinand VII, seemed completely in the power of the Revolutionaries ; and the Congress of Verona, which opened near the end of the year 1822, and at which Montmorency and Chateaubriand, as well as La Ferronays and Caraman, were the French plenipotentiaries, met to discuss the question of European interference in Spanish, as well as in Grecian affairs.

Louis XVIII had wished Villèle to represent France at the Congress. He disliked Chateaubriand, and he clung to Villèle as the most moderate and

calm-minded of the men around him. "Villèle," he implored, when he feared that his Minister would resign, "do not leave me to these brigands ; stay with me ; I will support you."¹

His health continued to decline, but sometimes he showed a flicker of energy, and then it was seen that his intelligence was still intact.

Many were the controversies on Spanish affairs ; and at a Council which had met to discuss whether or no the French Legation should remove from Madrid, in the case of a refusal on the part of the Spanish Revolutionaries to fulfil the demands the Great Powers had formulated at Verona, the King, after summing up the matter with a "clearness, sobriety of expression, and elegance which were remarkable under the circumstances,"² took the part of Villèle against Montmorency, and said that, owing to the proximity of Spain, it would not be safe to withdraw the French Ambassador from Madrid, till a large French army was crossing the frontier to succour his nephew Ferdinand VII.

Chateaubriand was now Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post he had undertaken with pretended reluctance ; and when it was decided that war should be declared against Spain, this was done mainly, he considered, at his instigation ; it was "his war," he announced, and he thought that the French Bourbons owed him a deep debt of gratitude for bringing about a military enterprise which assured their popularity, and, in his opinion, consolidated their position on the throne.

On March 14th, 1823, the Duc d'Angoulême started to take command of the expedition, and returned triumphantly to Paris on December 2nd, at the head

¹ Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. xii. p. 16.

² See Viel Castel, *loc. cit.*, vol. xiii. p. 368.

of a great part of his army. At Versailles he was met by Monsieur and Madame, the Duchesse de Berry was waiting to receive him at Saint-Cloud, and when he arrived at the entrance to the Tuileries, he dismounted to receive an embrace from Louis XVIII, accompanied by the words: "My son, I am pleased with you." Then the King was carried to the balcony, and 30,000 of the troops who had returned from Madrid passed in procession before him and the Royal Family; while in the evening Paris was brilliantly illuminated, and there were general rejoicings.

Great was the universal enthusiasm, brilliant the triumph of the ultra-Royalists who had brought about this happy state of affairs, and no one heeded the fact that the whole of Spain had been given over to the reprisals of a merciless despot.

Chateaubriand's triumph, however, was of short duration. His relations with Villèle had never been very amicable, and to the latter's indignation, after appearing to agree with him about a project brought forward by the Ministry for indemnifying the Émigrés by conversion of the Government stock, Chateaubriand had refused to support the measure in the Chamber. The King, instigated by Madame du Cayla, took Villèle's part with keenness, and in his increasing weakness showed an irritability which was usually foreign to his nature. He had always disliked Chateaubriand; and now his feelings were continually worked on by Madame du Cayla, who coveted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for La Rochefoucauld's father, the Duc de Doudeauville. Villèle was sent for by the King one morning, and found him much agitated. "Villèle," he said, "Chateaubriand has deceived us like a scoundrel. I will not see him at my reception after

Mass. Write out the order for his dismissal. Let them hunt for him everywhere, and give it to him in time. I refuse to see him.”¹

Chateaubriand was a dangerous enemy, and Villèle would in the future suffer from the imprudence of rousing his bitter hostility. Intrigues for place had, however, taken the place of patriotism, and there was now no guiding hand at the helm, for Louis XVIII only craved to be left in peace.

Sometimes, however, in spite of his desire for quiet, he found himself involved in storms, for Villèle showed distinct reluctance to fulfil La Rochefoucauld's behests, and to give him a place in the Ministry, where he would provide the country with “an arm of iron which no obstacle would stop, no difficulty would baffle, which would know how to arrange everything [here I must disclaim responsibility for mixed metaphors], to unite everything, to rally everything, and to make everything successful.”²

Then La Rochefoucauld became angry, and reminded Villèle of the oaths he declared that the latter had sworn when he begged for his assistance. He also urged Madame du Cayla to the combat; and not only interviewed her on the subject, but wrote to her continually. “It is painful to me,” he says, “to be in a position where I cannot prove my capacities; and if only I were to become Minister of the Interior, I would organise everything dealing with my department so that I should deserve no reproaches.” Madame du Cayla found the position of affairs most difficult, for La Rochefoucauld possessed extreme pertinacity, and incited her to do her best by saying that he “depended

¹ See Viel Castel, *Histoire de la Restauration*, vol. xiii. p. 372.

² *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. viii. p. 277.

completely on her, and that it was only that thought which gave him strength and kept up his courage.”¹

Madame du Cayala being beset herself, beset the unfortunate King ; and, between her assaults and the decided resistance of Villèle, Louis XVIII was on one occasion so much agitated that his health suffered severely, and for several days he was in a state of depression and exhaustion which alarmed those who surrounded him. He did indeed end by signing a paper nominating La Rochefoucauld to the Ministry ; but, in a last attempt to defend himself, he insisted that the document should be taken to his brother, and Monsieur, who was now all-powerful, for once showed wisdom ; and testified his disapproval so strongly, that it was impossible to proceed with the matter.

However, Villèle himself felt that, under the circumstances, it was necessary to do something for La Rochefoucauld ; and eventually that gentleman's father, the Duc de Doudeauville, was made Minister of the Maison du Roi ; and a separate department in this Ministry—that of the Beaux-Arts—was created for the son, who, as a special favour, was allowed to work directly with the King.

La Rochefoucauld's letter to Madame du Cayla, after his first visit to the Tuileries in his new capacity, is worthy of citation. “In the Castle,” he says, “I passed like any one else (except, perhaps, that they were more polite to me than to other people, and that, seeing me, a violent kick woke all the guards, and I received a magnificent bow from the superior officers). I then enter the Hall of Diana. They rise. Further on a footman runs up : ‘Will Monseigneur allow me to carry his portfolio ? Your Excellency is

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. viii. p. 277.

a few minutes early.' Then the ordinary gentlemen flock round ; they enter the King's room ; a most respectful salute invites me to follow ; in the expression of several devoted servants I read that the King is pleased. I am happy to see this excellent Prince."¹

The dealings of fate are inscrutable ; Richelieu and Decazes had retired from political life, disappointed and broken-hearted, while the gift of perfect happiness was vouchsafed to Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld.

Madame du Cayla was not left empty-handed. According to La Rochefoucauld, she had refused very valuable gifts which had been offered to her by Louis XVIII, such as a portfolio adorned with splendid diamonds, and a most magnificent ornament composed of the same precious stones. In view of the situation, and of the characters of those engaged in the drama, it may not be uncharitable to point out that these valuables were proffered to the lady during the early days of her friendship with Louis XVIII, when a position not very firmly established, necessitated strict adherence to the rôle of disinterested affection for the King. "Sire," she said, when thanking him for his munificent offers, "I am the only person in your kingdom who can accept nothing from your Majesty."²

The sentiment was gracefully expressed, besides being high-minded ; and Louis XVIII was reduced to the declaration that nothing should prevent him from providing most generously for his friend after his death. The lady's resolution, however, to receive nothing during the King's lifetime, gave way at the offer of a magnificent residence at Saint-Ouen, to be built on the site of the small house in which the King

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. viii. p. 399.

² *Ibid.*, vol. vii. p. 66.

had in 1814 signed the so-called Declaration of Saint-Ouen. As La Rochefoucauld puts it: "It was necessary to find something besides politics in which to occupy him [the King], and it seemed to me, I allow, impossible to persist in your refusal of Saint-Ouen. I therefore advised you to accept a gift which became afterwards more of a burden than a benefit; besides, the King looked on the matter as something personal, and attached enormous importance to it. Giving it to you, he said, 'My child, think that Saint-Denis¹ is not far from Saint-Ouen; you will pray there for me.'"

Madame du Cayla inaugurated her reign at Saint-Ouen with an entertainment, at which, after a play had been performed, she emerged from a recess crowned with a civic crown, and was proclaimed the heroine of the Charter. She had hoped that Monsieur would appear at her party; but he had hesitated, and at the last Madame persuaded him not to come. However, the whole diplomatic body were there, and bishops, as well as other distinguished ecclesiastics, graced the affair with their presence.

Half an hour before the entertainment, the King had paid Madame du Cayla a visit, and Madame de Boigne, who had gone to the party, which only a few very particular people refused to attend, tells us that the freshly made marks of his heavy coach-wheels could be seen in the well-gravelled drives, and that he had evidently driven round to inspect all the arrangements. She says: "The magnificence of the house had not been exaggerated. It was most convenient, and was constructed at the greatest expense. Every detail showed minute care. The gutter-spouts were of polished marble, and the banisters of the attic stair-

¹ The burial place of the French Royal Family.

case of mahogany. Nothing had been overlooked, and it was obvious that artists and workmen had been employed regardless of expense. The cleverest painters had been commissioned to decorate the walls. But all this luxury was in good taste and harmonious, and produced the effect of noble simplicity. In the library was an immense portrait of Louis XVIII, seated at a table and signing the Declaration of Saint-Ouen. Still more curious was the sight of the papal nuncio, Monseigneur Macchi, and Monsieur Lieutard, seated at the table and relieving one another in the task of praising the Christian virtues of their charming hostess. It should be said that this Monsieur Lieutard was the strict tutor of the religious youth of the period, and that none of his disciples would have ventured into a theatre, with the exception of that which Madame du Cayla was about to open to us.”¹

The King had not, however, forgotten Decazes, whom every one round him conspired to blacken ; and occasionally he still yearned for “his son.” Looking one day at La Rochefoucauld with a piercing gaze, though he strove to make his voice indifferent, he said : “Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, you know Monsieur Decazes. I have loved him like a most tender son ; I have still the most profound affection for him ; I wish to know your opinion of him.”

The poor old King continued to fix penetrating eyes on La Rochefoucauld, and listened in silence while that gentleman turned this opportunity to the best advantage for cleverly belittling and traducing the common enemy. At the end Louis XVIII is reported to have said : “You judge him perfectly ; he is deluded. I pity him. I am unhappy about it,

¹ Trans. *de Boigne Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 95.

and I do not love him the less." The King then insisted on Decazes' good qualities, and La Rochefoucauld did not trouble to dispute them much, as he felt he had said enough for his purpose."¹

The King was now almost blind, and signed without well realising its purport everything that was presented to him. Till a few days before his death he still took his daily drive, and the pity of the spectators was excited by seeing the bowed, shrunken figure hurried through the streets behind four galloping horses. So inanimate was he, that some people declared it was not the King, but a figure dressed to resemble him, which was paraded through the streets; others exclaimed indignantly at the cruelty of the Ministers in condemning a dying man to this suffering, in order to deceive every one as to the real state of his health.

These reports were of course untrue. "It is allowable for a King to die, but never to be ill," the King had said; and "the amount of determination, courage, and firm resolution he applied to the keeping of this maxim no one could believe without having witnessed it himself,"² remarks Villèle, who, as First Minister, had constant access to him.

He was perfectly aware of his desperate condition, and when the Council, fearing possible disturbances at the beginning of the new reign, proposed to put all the newspapers under censorship, he agreed promptly, and said to Villèle, "When you leave me, go at once to tell my brother what I have done."³ Nevertheless, on the festival of Saint-Louis, in spite of the fatigue and suffering it must have cost him, he insisted

¹ *La Rochefoucauld Mémoires*, vol. vii. p. 95.

² *Villèle Mémoires*, vol. v. p. 110.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

on receiving the congratulations of all the principal bodies of the State, replied to the harangue addressed to him by the Prefect with as much neatness and ease of elocution as though he had been in perfect health, and insisted on presiding afterwards at the Council.

Madame de Boigne was one of the King's fête-day visitors, and she says: "I had not seen him since the month of May, and I was much shocked by the great change in his appearance. He was seated in the same armchair, and was in his usual costume—a uniform brilliant with gold lace and studded with orders. The gaiters of black velvet round his legs were twice as large as before, and his once noble head was so diminished in size that it looked quite small. It dropped upon his chest so low that his shoulders rose above it; only with an effort could he raise his face, and then he showed features so changed and lifeless that there could be no doubt of his condition. He spoke a few kind words to me when I made my bow."¹

During the last few days of August, it was evident that the King had not long to live, and Villèle gives the following account of his condition:

"The King could no longer go out. He was confined to his sitting-room, where he still gave audiences. He had no longer sufficient strength to support his head, which, being unprotected, fell on the wood of his bureau. His attendants had in vain offered him the comfort of a pillow; he had refused it curtly. However, seeing his forehead bruised and his face bleeding, I ventured to beg him to allow me to have one brought, being obliged to speak to him about

¹ *De Boigne Mémoires*, vol. iii. p. 107.

an important matter for which it was necessary that he would be good enough to give me his orders, which it would be difficult for me to catch, unless his head were raised higher. He made a sign of consent, and allowed a pillow to be placed under his forehead, so that by bending it was easy for me to hear him. He answered me with the same clearness of mind and sureness of memory that he had possessed when in perfect health. In truth, the matter had to do with Monsieur the duc d'Orléans, against whom he was as much prejudiced as though he had been able to foresee the fate to which that Prince would one day submit the elder branch. Monsieur the duc d'Orléans asked for the 'Cordon bleu' for his son, who would the next day be fourteen years old; he made his request because the Princes of the Blood had been decorated with it at this age, and cited the example of the Duc d'Enghien in particular. The King said at once to me in the most positive tone: 'You will tell Monsieur the duc d'Orléans that he is mistaken—that what he asks for is only due at fifteen years of age, and that I will never do more for him than what is due. The example he cites condemns his pretensions. The Duc d'Enghien was born the— (he told me the day of the month and of the week); he only received the Cordon bleu the— (the same information), exactly fifteen years after his birth. Monsieur the duc de Chartres will only receive it from me to-morrow year.' ”¹

As the King's health failed, the Royal Family became most anxious that his confessor should be summoned, but no one dared to suggest the taking of this step, for though the King had a confessor, who lived in

¹ *Villèle Mémoires*, vol. v. p. 112.

a small back room at the Tuileries, he was terribly afraid of priestly domination. The preceding year he had asked Dr. Portal, his chief physician, what was likely to be the manner of his death, and, Portal answering evasively, the King had said :

“ Do not treat me as a fool, Portal. I know very well that I have not long to live, and I know that I shall suffer much at the last, perhaps more than at this moment. What I wish to know is whether the final crisis will take place in unconsciousness, or whether I shall be obliged to spend several days in agony.”

“ Why, Sire, as far as can be seen, your Majesty’s illness will be slow and gradual, and may last many years.”

“ Slow and gradual,” said the King with some temper ; “ that is not what I want to know. There is no prospect that I shall be found dead in my chair ? ”

“ I do not think there is any likelihood of that.”

“ Then it will be impossible to keep out my brother and his priests,” growled the King between his teeth, after a moment’s silence. And he turned the conversation.¹

The ever energetic La Rochefoucauld, however, decided that something must be done to prove that the King had died in the true flock, and after consulting with Monsieur, he took advantage of his opportunities of entrance to the King to implore him once more to see Madame du Cayla, to whom he had wished a last farewell. At first the King objected, saying that he feared his altered appearance would shock her ; but eventually she was summoned ; and after a long interview, Louis XVIII made a last sacrifice of his will, and consented to receive his confessor.

¹ *De Boigne Mémoires*, vol. iii, p. 110.

Meanwhile, one person at least was from afar watching Louis XVIII's agony with anguish. On September 15th, which was the day before the King's death, Decazes wrote to his friend Barante: "You know my feelings, you will guess my trouble; it will last all my life. My heart is broken, and my poor being is hardly less. Without doubt no one in the world weeps for him or will weep for him more, or will weep as much. . . . I am going to try to go to the Tuileries. I do not hope to see the King. What would I not give to see him once again, to kiss his hand for the last time; I would joyfully buy his blessing with ten years of my life. My debt was too great for me to think I had paid it towards the benefactor who deigned to give me the title of son and of friend, and my whole life will not suffice for it, but it shall all be employed in it."¹

Monsieur knelt at the foot of the bed, and all the other members of the Royal Family were present, when at four o'clock in the morning of September 16th, 1824, Louis XVIII's sufferings at last came to an end.

The Duchesse d'Angoulême's face was swollen with weeping. The dissensions of later growth were forgotten, and she thought only of the fact that the dying man had acted as a father to her during the days of wandering and exile. She was preparing to follow Monsieur out of the room, when she suddenly remembered that the Duc d'Angoulême, as son of a reigning monarch, must now take precedence of her, and she drew back, and in a voice nearly choked with sobs said, "Passez, Monsieur le Dauphin."

Louis XVIII was buried at Saint-Denis on September 23rd, 1824, with great pomp and all the customary ceremonies.

¹ *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. iii. p. 219.

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